from the progressive labor party periodical

THE communist

articles on

dialectics

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the key to communist philosophy

2004 - 2008

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This article reviews some of the intense debates about dialectics that took place in the 1960s in China, just before the Cultural Revolution. It points out lessons learned from those struggles that apply to the fight for communist revolution today. The article also shows that it is easier to learn dialectics when you can see the difference it makes in the key political issues of the communist movement.

II. "Internal Contradictions are Primary": A Key to Revolutionary Dialectics, Summer, 2008

This article explains the principle that the main thing that determines how something develops and changes are the contradictions inside it. The article uses this principle to analyze the contradictions that prevent capitalism from lasting forever. It discusses the role of internal contradictions in some important cases, including the rivalry between the U. S. and other imperialist powers, the destruction of New Orleans during hurricane Katrina, and the development of the communist revolutionary movement, led by the Progressive Labor Party.

III. "Antagonistic and Non-Antagonistic" Contradictions, Spring, 2004

This article explains a major error in dialectical theory, made by the old communist movement in the Soviet Union and China, the concept of so-called "non-antagonistic" contradiction. "Non-antagonistic" contradictions were supposed to be a special kind of social contradiction that occurs under socialism, a kind that does not tend to become more intense or lead to outbursts or revolutions. The idea that this special kind of contradiction existed was part of the old movement's mistaken view, that socialism, a system which tries to combine inequality and wages with working-class power, was a sustainable and internally peaceful system. In fact, socialism does not work this way, and does not lead to communism, the classless society. Rejecting the theory "non-antagonistic" contradictions is an important part recognizing a workers revolution can only prevent that the restoration of capitalism by fighting directly for communism, and bypassing socialism.

NOTE: This pamphlet contains three articles on communist dialectics which were originally published in three different issues of *The Communist*, a magazine published by the Progressive Labor Party. The page numbers are those of the original magazine issues. Two pages of notes which appeared only in the web version of the magazine have been attached to the end of the third article.

The Struggle for Revolutionary Dialectics
The Debate in 1960's China over "One Divides into Two" Versus "Two Combine into One"

By fighting for communism, the working class is making a huge change in society, a change we won't be able to make without understanding a lot about how change takes place. Dialectics is the philosophy of change and development, advanced by Marx and Engels and developed further in the Soviet and Chinese revolutions. To move the fight for communism forward, our party spreads knowledge of dialectics and develops it further, based on the experience of the international working class and developments in science. This article is about a big fight over dialectics that took place in China in the mid-1960s. Studying the history of past struggles over dialectical ideas is a particularly good way to learn about dialectics, since it shows the political results of different lines on dialectics. The debates we review here show clearly why having the right line about dialectics can make a big difference in the fight for communism. They also had an influence on the development of dialectical thinking in our party.

Unity of Opposites, the Basic Law of Dialectics

The most fundamental law of dialectics is that the unity and struggle of opposites is the basis of all change and development. A combination of unity and struggle is called a "contradiction." Every thing or process contains contradictions, that is, two sides that are connected to each other, but also struggle and interfere with each other. There are contradictions in every aspect of the world. The most important one is the contradiction in capitalist society between the working class and the capitalist class, but even a basketball game is a contradiction between two teams that are united in a single game, but play defense and hold each other back. Contradictions occur everywhere in nature, like the forces of attraction and repulsion inside an atom. Even inside the party, there are contradictions between different political ideas, which partly exist in everyone. Contradictions are important because they make things change. The internal back and forth struggle of the two sides of the contradiction causes change, and point that change in a particular direction. As long as capitalism lasts, the contradiction between workers and capitalist pushes capitalist society toward crisis and revolution. The contradiction between two basketball teams drives both teams to play harder. Contradictions don't last forever, however. Eventually they get resolved, that is, they stop being contradictions. The buzzer sounds in the basketball game, or communist revolution destroys capitalism. When contradictions are resolved, however, new ones are always created.

How Contradictions are Resolved

The biggest issue in dialectics is how contradictions are resolved. Marx said that resolution only happens when the two sides "fight to a decision," and one wins, for example, the working class overthrows the capitalists [1]. Right-wing philosophers claim that the two sides don't have to fight until one wins, but could merge into a so-called "synthesis." A synthesis is supposed to contains both sides in such a way that they no longer interfere with each other. Many union leaders, for example, oppose fighting the bosses, and claim that workers can have a kind of synthesis with bosses "for the common good." Throughout the history of the communist movement, support for one of these two lines on dialectics --"fighting to a decision" or "synthesis"--has marked the difference between revolutionary communist politics and revisionism, that is, capitalist politics posing as communist.

Soviet Revisionism in Philosophy

Because the politics of the fight for communism is closely linked to dialectical philosophy, conflict over dialectics has been a key part of the fight against revisionism. This was true during the so-called "Sino-Soviet Dispute" of the 1960s, which was a fight conducted by the Communist Party of China (CPC) against the revisionism of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Soviet leaders like Khrushchev rejected revolution and substituted for it "peaceful transition to socialism" and "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism. To back up these sell out ideas, Soviet philosophers claimed that oppositions can be overcome "by means of combination (merging)" [2] or claimed that "contradictions are transformed into differences, and differences are merged into unity."[3] In 1963 this idea that contradictions can be resolved by merging opposites was sharply rejected by CPC spokesman Zhou Yang:

> "The modern [Soviet] revisionists have wantonly distorted and revised the Marxist-Leninist teaching on the laws of contradiction, and spread their views about the merging and reconciliation of contradictions.... Some of their philosophers even claim that the law of the unity and struggle of opposites is outmoded under socialist conditions."[4]

Despite this CPC stance against the Soviet distortions of dialectics, we will see that similar ideas were in the CPC itself. In fact, the struggle against Soviet revisionism led directly to a struggle within the CPC against the so-called "capitalist road," that is, the politics and policies that led the USSR back to capitalism and imperialism. The Left in China fought against taking that road.

"One Divides into Two"

Mao Zedong, leader of the Chinese Communist Party until his death in 1976, called the unity-of-opposites law "One divides into two" [5], by which he meant that everything has two sides that struggle with each other. Mao used this "One divides into two" slogan to popularize dialectics and in particular to explain that since contradiction is everywhere, controversy and struggle are normal and unavoidable. To defend a version of the peaceful synthesis line, however, Yang Xianzhen, a philosophical big shot as head of the CPC's philosophy school, announced the slogan "Two combine into one." Yang claimed that "Two combine into one" is also a general dialectical law of change which says that all opposites tend to combine into a unified whole, without one side destroying the other. This view of dialectics was directly connected to the "capitalist road" line, which tried to strengthen the capitalist features of socialism in China, instead of making a rapid transition to communism.

Mao Zedong, 1935

Yang Combines Capitalism and Communism

Despite the fact that capitalism and communism can no more peacefully coexist than fire and ice, Yang described Chinese society as having a "synthesized economic base," which combined capitalist and socialist or communist social relations. He said the capitalist side didn't need to be smashed, but would disappear gradually and peacefully. In essence, this theory was a philosophical excuse for allowing capitalism to continue to exist openly in China after the working class had established political power. Like other "capitalist roaders" in China, Yang said that it was a good thing if some people became rich:

> "In recent years, there has been a tendency to fear people getting rich, which is extremely dangerous. The tendency of being afraid of people getting rich comes from the fear of the development of capitalism, from the fear of individuals trying to build up their own family fortune." [6]

The CPC's policy of allying with rich peasants and allowing "good capitalists," to keep running their businesses, called "New Democracy," strengthened the pro-capitalist forces in China. The pro-capitalist line supported a wage system with a lot of inequality and special privileges for party leaders and government officials. After a long struggle, these pro-capitalist forces eventually won power in China in 1978, led by Deng Xiaoping. Not surprisingly, in 1980 Yang's concept of "synthesized economic base" became the official description of China's economic system [7], a cover up for the fact that China had reverted to capitalism by then.

The Fight over "Two Combine into One"

In May, 1964, Ai and Lin, two of Yang's students at the CPC philosophy school, published an article defending his idea that "Two combine into one" was a general law of dialectics [8]. To support Yang's claim, they gave various examples of things that actually do combine, such as atoms that combine into molecules, and China's industry and agriculture, which combine into a single economy. They left out the fact that only some atoms can combine and may do so only after a difficult struggle, and the fact that China's agriculture and industry sometimes strongly interfered with each other.

Ai and Lin criticized the view that resolution requires that one side defeat the other. They said that "One divides into two," is only a method that people use to understand processes in the world, but isn't a fundamental law of all change. The debate started by this article raged in the press for over a year, and many workers and peasants eventually got in on it, writing hundreds of comments and articles.

In August, 1964, Mao weighed in on the debate. Instead of rejecting synthesis outright, he said that what synthesis really means is the stronger side "eating up" the weaker one. When the CPC defeated the capitalist armies of the Guomindang during the revolution,

> "The synthesis took place like this: their armies came, and we devoured them, we ate them bite by bite. It was not a case of two combining into one as expounded by Yang Xianzhen, it was not the synthesis of two peacefully coexisting opposites. They didn't want to coexist peacefully, they wanted to devour you." [9]

What is at stake in Mao's comments is not just a debate over the word "synthesis," but about how contradictions are resolved. Yang's view of change implied that there was no need to defeat the capitalist elements in Chinese society and inside the CPC, while Mao's view means that one side would win, and take over the losing side. Rather than fighting to a decision, Yang claimed that the two sides of a contradiction are "indivisibly connected" and

that "Dialectics is the teaching that shows how opposites become identical (united). Seek common ground while reserving differences." [10]

In the late 1960s in China there actually was a fight to a decision over the issue of capitalism versus communism, called the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR). While the GPCR was going on, Yang was thrown into jail until 1975. Convincing workers and peasants to understand that Yang's view of change was false was a crucial step toward launching the GPCR. You can't start a revolution if you think that the working class and the bosses are "indivisibly connected" and need to "seek common ground." The GPCR began soon after the "One divides into two" versus "Two combine into one" debate had run its course.

Ai Siqi's Contribution

In 1965, after a year of sharp struggle against "Two combine into one," the communist philosopher Ai Siqi, who represented a Left line in the CPC on this issue, summarized the results of the debate [11]:

- Opposite sides of things or processes are usually formed by dividing up, and not by combining two already existing things. Capitalism, for example, did not come about by sticking workers and capitalists together. Instead, the class differences between workers and bosses emerged and became more sharply defined through a dialectical process driven by the internal contradictions of capitalism, that is, by the capitalists' need to exploit workers to make a profit.
- When opposites do combine, their conflict continues and can intensify. At any given time, one side will have the upper hand. It is rare, and always temporary, for the two sides to have equal power. The idea of some people in the teachers' struggle in Oaxaca, for example, that the teachers' movement and the government can exist in parallel without one defeating the other is a dangerous illusion.
- When opposites do combine, it takes struggle to put them together and keep them together. To illustrate peaceful combination, Yang's students gave the example of atoms' combining to form molecules. But Beijing University chemistry professor Fu Ying countered that hydrogen and oxygen atoms may have to collide tens of millions of times before they stick together to form water. [12] When atoms do combine — and many cannot — there is always a struggle. Similarly, uniting the working class in the fight for communism can only happen after a long struggle by communists with the most ideologically advanced line.
- Opposites are not indivisible, as Yang's students claimed, but are at best relatively stable and eventually come apart. This was Lenin's point in his famous statement that "The unity ... of opposites is conditional, temporary, transitory, relative. The struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute, just as development and motion are absolute."[13] If opposites really were indivisible, how could a revolution ever take place?

Ai Siqi concluded that "Unity will exist if maintained through struggle; it will perish if sought through compromise." This means that unity of the working class can't be achieved by communists adopting the most popular position--making unprincipled compromises--but by fighting for unity around a more advanced line, even if it means giving up a lower level of agreement with some people, at least for the time being.

"Let new socialistic culture conquer every stage."

Philosophical Mistakes of the Left

Despite the important correct ideas that the pro-communist forces fought for in the "Two combine into one" debate, the good guys also had important ideological weaknesses during these debates. These weaknesses played a role in the eventual reversal of workers' power in China. While Mao Zedong, Ai Siqi, and others were right in their rejection of Yang's revisionist philosophy, they unfortunately shared a number of wrong ideas with Yang's side. These errors weakened their case against "Two combine into one," and led them to accept policies that helped strengthen the capitalist aspects of socialist China.

Since the late 1930s, the CPC had made alliances with the so-called "national bourgeoisie," the supposedly "good" capitalists willing to work with communists. During the war against Japanese imperialism, the CPC even made alliances with big landlords who were willing to fight against the Japanese invasion. The CPC agreed with the rest of the international communist movement during World War II that it was necessary to build a "united front" with various "lesser" enemies of the working class to oppose fascism. Everywhere it was practiced, this policy proved to strengthen pro-capitalist forces and severely damaged the communist movement. Ai Siqi agreed with the idea of a united front with "good" capitalists, but argued with Yang about how unity with the enemy should be analyzed and carried out. Sticking up for a united front with the enemy was an important concession to Yang's claim that opposites really could combine into a relatively stable whole.

"Non-Antagonistic" Contradictions

Both sides of the debate also said that under socialism, there is a special type of contradiction called "non-antagonistic," which can be eliminated without becoming more intense and fighting to a decision. This idea, which also proved completely wrong, assumed that workers' power could be combined with the capitalist features of socialism, like a wage system, without leading to intense conflict. But in the GPCR, the internal conflicts of socialism in China became very intense and eventually broke out into a civil war. These events in China showed that socialism itself is a contradiction, which attempts to combine workers' power with capitalist inequality, a contradiction which is not "non-antagonistic," but must be resolved by a fight to the finish. Unfortunately, the workers and peasants lost this fight in the GPCR.

The theory of non-antagonistic contradictions seemed plausible partly because it gave a rationale for treating contradictions among friends differently than contradictions between enemies. Its mistake was claiming that the types of contradiction and the course of their development and resolution are different in these two cases. Non-antagonistic theory says that contradictions "among the people" do not tend to become more intense. On the contrary they do tend to be come more intense, but still must be resolved by different methods--different ways of becoming intense--than contradictions with the enemy.

Contradictions Among Friends and Comrades

In the party and among friends we should not see fighting to a decision as one group of people defeating another, but one line winning out over another. Fighting for the best line means winning people away from mistaken views and actions, which the Chinese communists called "curing the disease to save the patient." Of course, the struggle to cure the patient might make him worse temporarily. Reaching a "higher unity," a unity based on more thorough agreement with a more advanced line, can mean giving up a lower unity. This idea also applies to struggling for the party's line in mass organizations. We aim for a "higher unity" of the working class, which means not only giving up a lower unity with pro-boss liberals, but perhaps also with some workers and their allies who can't be won over to the higher view at this time.

Although the CPC fought against Khrushchev's line about "peaceful transition to socialism," Ai Siqi's comments show that the CPC had adopted part of that line. Ai said that that China had to struggle against imperialists to "preserve peace," wrongly assuming that the contradiction between workers' power and imperialism could be kept from intensifying. In fact, the Vietnam War was already heating up. In the early 1970s, the CPC caved in to U.S. imperialism and made a deal with U. S. President Nixon, partly out of fear of Soviet imperialism after the reversal of workers' power in the Soviet Union. This deal with the U. S. bosses also strengthened the pro-capitalist forces in the CPC and helped pave the way for the defeat of working class power in China in 1978.

Other Philosophical Battles in Pre-GPCR China

Although the "Two combine into one" was the biggest and most important, there were a number of other philosophical battles in the late 1950s and 1960s in China that were a significant part of the fight against revisionism. These issues are all connected and people who had the wrong ideas about "Two combine into one" were wrong about these other issues, too.

One issue was the question of the main contradiction in Chinese society. Every thing or process has multiple contradictions inside it that effect how it changes. At any one time, one of these contradictions has the biggest influence on the development of that thing. This is called the main contradiction. In 1956, CPC leader Liu Shaoqi, who became the most notorious "capitalist road" politician during the GPCR, claimed that the main contradiction in China was between its "advanced socialist system" and its "backward social productive forces." This implied that resolving the contradiction between the working class and the capitalist class was not the CPC's main job. Liu and other "capitalist roaders" wanted the party to concentrate on building up production in ways that strengthened capitalist relations, rather than fighting an anti-capitalist class struggle, which they saw as basically over. [14]

Productive Forces Determinism

The "main contradiction" issue is directly connected to a revisionist theory of social development called "productive forces determinism." This theory says that the development of new social relations--like communism--is mainly driven by the development of society's forces of production, rather than by politically conscious social movements and political action. It claimed that political movements can accomplish something only when the productive forces have gotten big enough. This meant that communism would only be possible in the far future, when a high level of economic development has been achieved. (For a thorough explanation of what is wrong with productive forces determinism, see the *PL Magazine* article at http://www.plp.org/pl_magazine/commecon.html).

> Yang Xianzhen, who supported this reactionary theory, claimed that:
>
> "Only with a higher level of productive forces than that of socialist society, namely, the level of communist society, can we practice the principle 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.'"[15]

In fact much of the Chinese communist movement had lived for a long time on a very modest need-based system, called the "supply system," which was dismantled after the 1949 revolution. In the late 1950s, Mao advocated going back to this egalitarian system, which was not based on a high level of development of the forces of production:

> "Why must we grasp a wages system? .... Our Party is a party which continuously fought a war for more than 20 years. For a long time it has implemented the free supply system. From several tens of thousands of persons it grew to several million, right up to liberation. In the very beginning the collective lived an egalitarian life. In work everyone was industrious and in warfare all were courageous. *There was absolutely no reliance on material incentives, but rather a reliance on the drumbeat of revolutionary spirit."* [16]

Mao's argument here is not only that past experience shows that a high level of development of production is not necessary for equality, but that political commitment and "revolutionary spirit," rather than wages and inequality, can motivate people to work hard and fight hard. In general, Mao argued that political movements can make enormous changes in the social relations and productive forces of society--that political ideas and actions can change material reality.

The Dialectical Identity of Thought and Being

The idea that political consciousness and actions can change reality doesn't just apply to rejecting wages and inequality. In line with Marx's statement that "theory itself becomes a material force once it has gripped the masses" [17], Mao made a more general point this way:

> "Among our comrades there are many who do not yet understand [the dialectical materialist] theory of knowledge.... Nor do they comprehend that matter can be transformed in consciousness and consciousness into matter, although such leaps are phenomena of everyday life." [18]

Matter is transformed into consciousness everyday because people learn new information by observing and changing the world. On the other hand, transforming consciousness into matter is what workers do when they work. Workers modify parts of the world according to plans they have in advance, changing their goals and ideas into material reality. As Marx wrote in Capital, "At the end of every labor process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the laborer at its commencement." [19] The communist movement performs a collective labor that changes society according to its plans and makes a new collective, egalitarian society. Like all labor, however, the fight for communism can only succeed if our plans are based on objective knowledge of the world.

In dialectical terminology, the fact that matter can be transformed into ideas and ideas into matter is called the "dialectical identity of thought and being." "Dialectical identity" doesn't mean that two things are the same, but that they are linked together, and in the right circumstances, one can be transformed into the other.

Yang Xianzhen accepted that matter can produce ideas, but he rejected the idea that political consciousness can lead to material changes. He rejected the dialectical identity of thought and being as an idealist principle that leads to "subjectivism." In particular he called trying to make a rapid transition to communism "subjectivism."

Sticking up for the dialectical identity idea, Ai Siqi pointed out the political consequences of denying it. He wrote that

> "Those who deny the dialectical identity of thought and existence, who can't see the subjective dynamism of the people, and that leading thought, while reflecting objective law, can enter into the mass movement and transform into a great material force that can move heaven and earth. Such people make right opportunist mistakes."[20]

Denying that political consciousness can transform into changes in the world not only denies the power of mass movements, but also rules out social organization based on political "incentives," rather than wages and inequality, that is, communism.

What We Inherit from Communist Philosophy in China

We have only given a short sketch of the many-sided philosophical struggles in the communist movement in China. All of these issues are still directly relevant to the fight for communism, and especially the struggle against revisionism, but the lessons about dialectics are the most important. Although the pro-capitalist wing of the CPC eventually won, let Yang out of jail, and even now praise

him as a hero [21], correct ideas about dialectics are among the many important political and philosophical lessons that we should learn from the GPCR period. The struggle in China to defeat the philosophy of reconciliation was a big advance in dialectics, despite important mistakes.

The rejection of the "Two combine into one" idea is directly relevant to our work in mass organizations, which are often led by agents of the liberal imperialists. It is dead wrong to expect that pro-worker and pro-boss politics can combine peacefully inside mass organizations. Instead, we have to fight to win workers and their allies to our line and defeat the ideas of the enemy. If we don't sharpen the struggle for our line and against capitalist ideas among the rank and file, these organizations will strengthen the capitalists hold over the working class.

It is also up to us to apply the advanced dialectics developed in China more thoroughly than was done there, and apply the critique of "Two combine into one" to socialism. Socialism tried to combine working class power with wages and inequality, which are fundamentally capitalist relationships. These two sides are incompatible and in all cases, lead to the downfall of socialism and its replacement by capitalism. In the Soviet Union and in China, however, even people who fought against right-wing philosophy and politics considered these incompatible sides to be in a "non-antagonistic" relation. The history of socialism shows, however, that the wage system and workers' power have to fight to a decision. Unless the wages system is defeated, the inequality that it brings will take us back to capitalism. This is the biggest lesson from "One divides into two."

"Smash the old world / Establish a new world."

[1] K. Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law," in *Marx Engels Collected Works*, New York, 1976, vol. 3, p. 89.

[2] P. N Fedoseev, "The 22nd Congress of the CPSU and the Tasks of Scientific Research Work in the field of Philosophy," *Voprosy Filosofii*, 1962, no. 4, pp. 19-20.

[3] M. B. Mitin, "The 22nd Congress of the CPSU and the Tasks of Scientific Work in the Field of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy, *Voprosy Filosofii*, 1962, no. 4, p. 137.

[4] Zhou Yang, "The Fighting Task Confronting Workers in Philosophy and the Social Sciences," *Beijing Review*, Jan 3, 1964, p. 17.

[5] Mao Zedong, *Selected Works*, Beijing, 1977, vol. 5, p. 516.

[6] Yang Xianzhen, "Respect Dialectics (November, 1961)," *Chinese Law and Government*, vol. 24, nos. 1-2, Spring-Summer 1991, p. 108.

[7] Yao Bomao, "Reevaluating the 'Theory of an Integrated Economic Base'," *Guangming Ribao*, 7/3/80, FBIS 7/24/80.

[8] Ai Hengwu and Lin Qingshan, "'Dividing one into two' and 'Combining two into one'," *Guangming Ribao*, 5/29/64, Current Background, #745.

[9] S. Schramm, *Mao Tse-Tung Unrehearsed*, London, 1974, pp. 224.

[10] Yang Xianzhen, "Study and Grasp the Law of the Unity of Opposites ...," *Chinese Law and Government*, vol. 24, nos. 1-2, Spring-Summer 1991, p. 113.

[11] Ai Siqi, "Surreptitious Substitution of Theory of Reconciliation of Contradictions and Classes for Revolutionary Dialectics Must Not Be Permitted," *People's Daily*, May 20, 1965, SCMP 3475.

[12] Gong Yushi, "Some Matters Concerting Professor Fu Ying," *Beijing University Gazette*, October 20, 2002, http://www.pku.edu.cn/news/xiao_kan/newpaper/969/3-1.htm

[13] V. I. Lenin, "On the question of dialectics," in *On Dialectical Materialism*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977, p. 382.

[14] The Writing Group of the State Planning Commission, "Continuing the Revolution or Restoring Capitalism? Criticizing the 'theory of productive forces' of Liu Shao-chi and other political swindlers," *Beijing Review*, 9/10/71.

[15] Yang Xianzhen, "Uphold the Workstyle of Seeking Truth from Facts ...," *Chinese Law and Government*, vol. 24, nos. 1-2, Spring-Summer 1991, p. 73.

[16] Mao Zedong, "Opinion on the Free Supply System," in *Miscellany of Mao Tse-Tung Thought* (1949-1968), vol. II, Joint Publications Research Service, JPRS 61269-2, 20 Feb. 1974, Page 233, emphasis added.

[17] K. Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law. Introduction," *Marx Engels Collected Works*, New York, 1976, vol. 3, p. 182.

[18] Mao Zedong, "Where to Correct Ideas Come from?" in *Mao Tse-Tung Four Essays on Philosophy*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1968, p. 136.

[19] K. Marx, Capital, vol. I, *Karl Marx Frederick Engels Collected Works*, New York : International Publishers, 1976, vol. 35, p. 188.

[20] Ai Siqi, as quoted in C. L. Hamrin, *Alternatives within Chinese Marxism 1955-1965: Yang Hsien-Chen's Theory of Dialectics*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1975, p. 275, punctuation modified.

[21] "Party Strength," *People's Daily*, Beijing, 7/20/03.

"Internal Contradictions are Primary" A Key to Revolutionary Dialectics

"Change" is a word that has been in the air for some time now. Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, media pundits, politicians, and conservative as well as liberal intellectuals constantly claim that the world has dramatically changed. The so-called "war on terror" and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have changed the face of global politics. Homeland Security and the growth of policing and intelligence agencies within the United States have ushered in a change in the role and organization of the State. More recently, 2008 presidential hopefuls—from Barack Obama and Hilary Clinton to even John McCain—call for more needed changes in the U.S.: a bigger military, national service, comprehensive immigration reform and a guest worker program, the DREAM Act and a "green-card army," as well as more sacrifices on the part of workers, students, and soldiers. The working class faces a changing U.S. living standard, with more cuts in education and healthcare, ever-lower wages, disappearing benefits and pension plans, closed hospitals, and the tragedies of collapsing bridges, freeways, and levees.

For many working families, these changes seem to have happened overnight. But the truth is that they are part of the long history of capitalism, which inevitably always leads to imperialist wars, racist attacks on workers, and fascism. How are workers, soldiers, and students to understand these recent changes in capitalism and among its competing ruling classes? How should communists understand them? How do they play a role in the struggle for a communist society? Progressive Labor Party (PLP) believes that dialectical materialism—the theory of how things in our world unfold, develop, and undergo change—is the key to understanding the situation in the world today and the changes on the horizon. It is also key to building a movement to make revolutionary change, through class struggle, communist politics, and a strong international mass PLP that will fight for workers' state power and a communist future.

To create a revolutionary communist movement, dialectical materialism must be the weapon of the international working class. It is especially important for industrial workers and soldiers, who have a vital role to play in communist revolution. They need dialectical materialism to understand the broader motives behind the ruling classes' growing attacks on workers. With a dialectical materialist understanding of the larger crises of capitalism, industrial workers, soldiers, and students can put into practice the potential revolutionary power they hold to smash imperialism and the racist profit system that breeds it. PLP fights to make dialectical materialism as popular as possible among its members and among the international working class as a whole. The following article discusses the dialectical principle of "internal contradictions are primary" (how the internal features of a thing determine its development) and why this principle is important to the building of a mass working-class PLP. It furthers PLP's struggle to popularize dialectical thinking and practice among members and workers—in order not only to understand the world today, but more importantly, to change it.

The history of class society, the Communist Manifesto said, is the "history of class struggle," the conflict of the social groups inside society that have opposite relationships to production. This means that social change does not come about primarily by factors outside society, like climate or environmental processes, although these things certainly make a difference. Instead, the effect that external factors have on capitalist society is mainly determined by factors internal to capitalism. Although the U. S. empire was riding high after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it now faces a variety of constantly increasing challenges from other capitalist powers, including Europe, Russia, China, India, Venezuela, etc. These problems for the U. S. have emerged because of the inner laws of development of world capitalism.[1] The same is true of other events, like Katrina disaster in New Orleans, which was not primarily caused by the hurricane, but by internal contradictions—physical and social—of New Orleans and of the U. S. capitalist system.

The General Principle

These processes are examples of the one of the main principles of dialectics, the communist philosophy of change and development. This principle, which says that conflicts inside something are the main cause of how it develops, is called "internal contradictions are primary". We can state that principle more carefully this way:

> Although external conditions make a difference, what happens to a thing almost always depends mainly on its internal relationships, and how it changes and what it becomes are due primarily to its internal contradictions.

This principle applies to phenomena of all kinds in nature, society, politics and thought, and expresses a key idea of dialectics. It is directly opposed to the mechanical materialist idea that change is caused mainly by external factors (see Appendix I for more explanation of mechanical materialism). The fact that internal contradictions are the main cause of change is critical for understanding how the party learns and grows, the role of leadership and struggle in developing the communist movement, and what it takes for communists to advance the struggle for revolution within reform struggles. The role of internal contradictions is particularly important for understanding the growing weaknesses of the capital-

ist system, and the vital importance of a constant internal struggle against opportunism and other weaknesses inside the party. In fact, this is one of the main applications of the fundamental law of dialectics, that everything contains contradictions that make it change, a law that helps guide us to victory in the long-term fight for communism.

It is this understanding that internal contradictions are primary which led our Party to examine deeply the internal contradictions in the old communist movement whichthat led to its collapse, u—unlike revisionists like Michael Parenti who blame the strength of the imperialists for the downfall of the USSR.

Before we get to these big topics, however, let's go through some specific examples.

Getting Sick

Suppose that someone comes down with an infectious disease like tuberculosis (TB). What causes this change from health to disease? Since we are looking for the truth, we are going to answer such questions about what causes change from a materialist viewpoint. Materialism says that causation is an objective relationship that really exists, and that operates whether anyone knows about it or not. Several common theories in capitalist philosophy deny this and introduce a subjective element into causation. They make what causes what depend on what some individual or group of people believe or are interested in.

One common capitalist view, called "empiricism," claims that the difference between accidental relationships and causal ones "consists in our attitude towards them." [2] Others claim that causal connections only exist because of scientists' theories: "Causes certainly are connected with effects; but this is because our theories connect them, not because the world is held together by cosmic glue."[3] A third popular subjectivist theory claims that what causes what depend on the "perspective" of some individual or group:

"Causation is not an absolute relation, however, not a relation that holds in metaphysical reality independently of any perspective. For Earthians it may be a discarded cigarette that causes a forest fire, while for Martians it is the presence of oxygen. Strictly speaking 'X causes Y is true or false not absolutely, but only relative to perspective."[4]

As we will see later, both of these claims about what causes forest fires are objectively wrong, whether you are from Earth or Mars.

Materialism rejects all these bogus ideas and says that causes are objective. But what kind of objective cause makes someone come down with an infectious disease?

Ever since the late 1800s, it has been known that diseases like TB are transmitted by germs. You can't get TB without being exposed to a certain kind of bacteria. These germs are necessary to get the disease, but are they the main cause of the disease? Mechanical materialism says that the answer is "yes," and the scientists who first discovered the role of germs in TB thought so, too. We now know, however, that the answer is "no." One way to see this is to recognize that for many diseases, TB included, only a small percentage of the people who are exposed to the germ that transmits the disease will actually get sick. [5] So getting exposed to the germ is only part of the cause of the disease.

The rest of the explanation of how infectious disease develops goes roughly this way: when a germ enters your body, it is attacked by your body's immune system. That system tries to destroy the germs or neutralize their effects. If the germs win the struggle, you get sick. If the immune system wins, you don't get sick or your illness is minor. Vaccines can strengthen the immune system. The system can also be weakened by other factors, like the presence of HIV. In any case, the outcome of this internal conflict is the main factor that determines whether you get sick once you are exposed to the germ.

Since you can't get sick without the germ, however, limiting exposure also limits the disease.

Convincing Someone

Supposed you try to convince a co-worker that communism is the right way to organize society and wages aren't necessary. What does it mean to convince someone? Convincing is a struggle, which takes place within a relationship that has some degree of unity. You can't just try to make your external influence stronger, by saying the same thing over and over, or yelling real loud, which would be a mechanical approach.

You have to figure out what are the contradictions in that person's thinking, experience, and actions, and show that communism resolves some of them. What those contradictions are depend on who you are talking to. Some people will see the point that communism is the only way to eliminate racism, for example, while others won't agree with this point or won't think it is that important.

By making an argument, or involving someone in a political activity, you are providing an external influence, one that will only be effective if it modifies a contradiction inside that person in the right way. This point also applies to the working class generally. Since most workers are not communists already, communist ideas come from outside workers' reform movements and social organizations, and it is the party's job to provide them. But those ideas will be accepted only if they help resolve contradictions that are already inside, by making those internal contradictions more intense. When this happens, external ideas become internal ones.

Developing a Good Line is a Constant Struggle

Anybody who understands that capitalism has got to go needs to deal with the fact that the old communist movement didn't get to communism. This means that you

have to figure out what went wrong with the old movement. PLP concluded, as a recent C/D article put it, that "Revisionism and nationalism killed people's war in Vietnam, as they destroyed the once-mighty rule of the working class in the Soviet Union and China."[6] Most leftist groups have been pretty clueless about this, but PLP has been able to make some important advances over the line of the old movement. Why did this happen? Part of the explanation is that external circumstances have changed. Given the failure of socialism in the USSR and China, we have more experience to evaluate than people had in the past. But this is not the main reason for PLP's advanced line.

Although practice is the ultimate basis for all knowledge, people do not automatically draw the right conclusions from practical experience. Beliefs they are already committed to, their determination to get to the bottom of the matter, and other internal factors determine how well they will figure out what previous practice shows. Some of the information that would show that the old movement's line was wrong has been available for a long time. In 1969, for example, PLP declared that nationalism is a capitalist outlook that workers must reject, just as we reject racism as a capitalist attack on the working class. The pro-capitalist outcome of a series of "national liberation" struggles made it easier to see this point. Sixty years earlier, however, a pamphlet written by Stalin listed a whole series of disastrous results of nationalism in that movement, but didn't reject nationalism completely. Still today, many revisionist (fake leftist) organizations claim that nationalism can be a progressive thing. The PLP was able to come to the right conclusion not mainly because of new evidence, but because of its commitment to break with all forms of revisionism. This is true as well of PLP's conclusion that socialism can't get you to communism. Drawing this conclusion probably did require an external stimulus, from the experience of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) of the 1960s. But almost no one other than the PLP has drawn the right conclusion from this evidence.[7] The party drew the right conclusion mainly because of its line, its leadership, and its internal struggle, although having some of the right kind of historical experience was also necessary.

Developing the right line at one time doesn't mean that the struggle for that line is over, of course. Like racism and sexism, the inner contradictions of capitalism generate nationalism, as a way to make the working class loyal to "its" nation. Rather than giving into the bosses' nationalist propaganda, communists must constantly fight for an internationalist, anti-racist outlook.

Working Out What Internal Contradictions Mean

That internal contradictions are the main cause of change is an important idea, worth working out in detail. To explain it and understand the mistakes that are made when it is ignored, we need to discuss three concepts that are parts of it: (1) what a contradiction is, (2) what we mean by "internal," and (3) what "primary" means. We start with the concept of "internal."

Systems and Processes

The kind of thing that something can be internal to is a system, process, object or relationship, something whose various parts or sides are connected to and depend on each other. This kind of thing has to have enough coherence and organization to be able to tell it apart from any bigger system that contains it. We'll call it "process" or "system." A system can be an atom, a rock, a person, a family, a mass organization, a political party, a class, an economic mode of production, a planet, a galaxy, etc. For most purposes, we can also include theories, or kinds of thinking as systems. Collections of objects that may have little connection with each other, like the people listed on a random page of the phone book, or the contents of someone's pocket, don't count as systems, since these things don't have enough connection or coherence. It is important that the systems we are talking about are whole things, not just pieces of things. The changes in your left foot might be mainly due to processes in your whole body, not just your foot. Likewise, the internal contradictions of California's economy might not be the main factors that determine economic changes in California, since that state's economy is integrated into the whole U. S. economy. The changes in the whole U. S. economy, however, are mainly due to its internal contradictions, even though the U.S is also contained in the larger world economy, and therefore is affected by the contractions-contradictions inside the capitalist system itself.

What a Contradiction is

Supposing we have a system to consider, we next look at the contradictions inside the relationships that make up that system. We use the term "contradiction" here in the sense of dialectical contradiction. A dialectical contradiction means a system whose different parts or aspects are connected with each other but which conflict or interfere with each other, as a unity and struggle of opposites.

The contradiction that is most important in the fight for communism is between the working class and the capitalist class. The working class and capitalist class are connected together and form a system, since you can't be a capitalist unless you exploit some workers, and you can't be a member of the working class unless some capitalist exploits you. This systematic connection is not cooperation, however, and capitalists and workers constantly interfere with each other's aims and plans. The two classes form a unity of opposites, but there is struggle within that unity, a struggle that will eventually break the unity apart and eliminate the capitalist class.

Dialectical contradictions are not limited to conflicts between classes, but occur everywhere. Here are some

other examples:

(a) A basketball game: two teams are united in the same game, but they not only try to score more than the other team, they play defense and hold the other team back.

(b) An atomic nucleus: the protons and neutrons in a nucleus both repel and attract each other. If repulsion becomes stronger than attraction, then the atom is radioactive and flies apart.

(c) Opposite ideas in a party club: Club members are united in the fight for communism, but have conflicting viewpoints and proposals about what the club should do or how to do it.

(d) Rival imperialist powers: Imperialists strive for resources, markets, and labor, and try to prevent their rivals from getting these things.

(e) Reform versus revolution: Organizing for reforms and for revolution may be united in the same person or organization, but are contradictory efforts, which interfere with each other more than they help each other.

The Dominant Side of a Contradiction

The two sides of a dialectical contradiction are not usually equally powerful, and when they are, their equality does not last long. One side is dominant, and the fact that it is stronger determines the quality of the contradiction that contains it. The capitalist class is dominant as long as capitalism lasts, but the working class can become dominant by revolution. If an atomic nucleus stays together, it is because attraction is dominant. If repulsion becomes the dominant side, it will fly apart. Two basketball teams can be tied, but we don't let the game end that way. The winner becomes the dominant side of the contradiction, at least for one game. Either reform or revolution can be dominant in a working class movement, and if reform wins, then communism loses.

Contradictions and Change

The most important thing about dialectical contradictions is that they cause change. They do this because the clash of opposites interfering with each other, which every contradiction contains, is a source of activity. The struggle of the conflicting sides of a contradiction is redirected into one or more directions and produces change. In a basketball game, each side needs to adjust its play to its opponent's game, and when the game is on the line, everyone plays with more intensity. In class struggle under capitalism, the bosses constantly have to come up with new ways to exploit workers and stay on top. On their side, workers are constantly fighting to keep things from getting worse, while more and more are open to learning that we have to get rid of the capitalist system completely.

In the nucleus of an atom, the contradiction of the forces of attraction and repulsion also constantly cause change. Even if the nucleus doesn't fly apart, it still changes shape and particles move around inside it.

Contradiction is the source of all these changes, but the pattern we see in these cases is completely general. There are contradictions in everything and these contradictions cause change

The Main Contradiction

Any real process or system has lots of contradictions, but some are far more important than others. The main contradiction of a system is the one which—for the time being—has the biggest effect on how that system changes. The main contradiction in the world today is between the U. S. empire and its various imperial rivals. The weaknesses exposed by the U. S. failure in Iraq have encouraged other powers to challenge the U. S.: Russian-U. S. conflicts about Eastern Europe are intensifying, China is competing for oil everywhere, Chavez and other Latin American nationalists are taking advantage of U. S. weakness.

Although the main contradiction in the world now is between capitalist rivals, that doesn't mean that working class resistance or its potential activism is not an important factor. To strengthen its side of this main contradiction, the U.S. capitalists need to win over workers, soldiers, and students to believe that the U. S. empire is a good thing for them. One of the ways capitalists try to promote "loyalty" to the U. S. bosses is by building patriotism in reform movements. From the movement against the Iraq war to the fight to defend a N. Y. city charter school that emphasizes Arabic language and culture, to the fight against the racist Minutemen, the liberal bosses will use the call for multi-racial unity to try to get us to follow their leadership and support bosses' institutions and policies. Our job in these reform movements is not only to fight against racism and imperialist war, but to get people to see that, like all capitalists, liberal bosses need to promote racism and war. The liberal bosses are the main enemy. This struggle is critical to shifting the main contradiction in the world from inter-imperialist rivalry to the class conflict between the united working class and the capitalists. At that point, the fight for communism will become central.

The Fundamental Law of Dialectics

The most fundamental principle of dialectics is called the law of the unity and struggle of opposites. This principle says that there are dialectical contradictions everywhere. Everything contains a system of relationships in which some parts interfere with others. These relationships are also included in larger systems, which are also contradictory. Since contradictions are everywhere, and they cause change, it follows that there is change and motion everywhere. More important for our topic of the role of internal contradictions, the unity and struggle of opposites law implies that everything has sources of activity inside it, which can make it change itself. It is a key feature of dialectics, as Lenin said, that it "alone furnishes the key to 'self-movement' of everything existing."[8]

Lenin's expression, "'self-movement' of everything existing" goes one step farther than just saying that the internal contradictions in things are sources of activity. It says that these internal contradictions are the main causes of the changes that happen to those things.

System Versus External Conditions

Our previous examples show that the internal contradictions of a thing or process usually need some specific external conditions in order to operate and produce change. To explain how internal contradictions can be primary, therefore, we need to say a few words about how to tell a system or process from its external conditions. Partly this is done by our explanation of what a system is, that is, a set of inter-connected relationships that depend on and influence each other. But there is more to the relationship of a system and its external conditions than that. One thing that distinguishes many conditions from the system that operates in them is that conditions can be passive. In order to live, a human being must breath oxygen--oxygen is a condition for human life. But oxygen does not tend to produce life, human or otherwise. It isn't a source of that kind of activity.[9]

Active External Conditions

It can happen, however, that an external condition is active and can stimulate internal change, like when you get hit by a car and break a leg. For a human being, being hit by a car is a seriously unfavorable external action, and you are bound to get some damage from it. But the fact that the collision results in injury still depends on the internal make up of the thing that gets hit. If the same car had hit a concrete wall, the damage to the wall would probably be small.

External conditions can also limit or prevent internal change. Plants without water cannot grow, and plants with only a little water will only grow a little. When there is racism, cynicism or patriotism among workers, students or soldiers, it will limit the growth of the communist movement, although the growth of the movement can also reduce these limiting factors.

It isn't only external conditions that can limit development, however. Capitalism's development, for example, is limited by a falling rate of profit, crises of overproduction, and imperialist wars, things that result from the internal contradictions of capitalism. Both internal and external factors can hold back development, but internal contradictions are still the main source of a thing's development.

All processes exist within limits, but limits do not determine the internal contradiction. In fact, it is the internal contradictions of a process that help determine its limits, and by sharpening these contradictions, the limits can and will be changed. In the case of building the Party, what you do counts, that is, what we do, like expanding Challenge networks in a factory, school barracks or neighborhood will expand the limits of the party's ability to influence events and grow. Such growth (however modest) in turn lays the basis to expand the limits of our work even more.

Not understanding that internal contradictions are primary, that we can change the limits, makes you a slave to spontaneity, that is: either we are critical and self-critical and constantly looking for ways to improve our line and work, or we just hope for big movements to arrive spontaneously.

Control is not the Same as Cause

When an external event triggers a complex process, it is seldom the primary cause of that process, but it can often exert some control. When a human being knows that he or she can control a process with an external stimulus, we often hold him or her responsible for the results, even if that stimulus was not the main cause. A gun won't usually fire without pulling the trigger. It is the chemical process inside the cartridge that causes the bullet to fly off, but we still hold the person who pulls the trigger responsible when someone gets shot. Being the main cause of some event and being responsible for it are not the same thing.

Even when an external condition provides a stimulus for change, it is the internal organization of the system that determines what external conditions count, how much importance they have, and what change will result. In fact, whether something counts as an external condition for a system at all will depend entirely on the internal make up of that system. Oxygen supply is an external condition for human life, but a supply of argon gas is not, although that gas is also found in the air we all breathe. The stuff is there, but it presence makes no difference to our internal processes, so it doesn't count as an external condition.

What 'Primary' Means

Internal contradictions are primary partly because they are the active source of development and change, while external circumstances often produce no particular activity at all. Even when an external stimulus is a source of activity of some kind, the effect that it has is modified by a thing's internal contradictions, and may be enhanced, redirected or canceled out by those internal contradictions. Mao Zedong put the point this way: "external causes are the condition of change and internal causes are the basis of change." The development of imperialist war and fascism are conditions that make communist revolution possible, but the basis of that change is the internal make up of the communist movement, and particularly, of its political line.

The way an external condition or event makes a difference is by affecting an internal contradiction. An external influence can strengthen or weaken one side of a contradiction, and even change which side is dominant. You can give a child a booster shot to strengthen his or her immunity to some disease because the shot effects specific internal contradictions. A teacher who thinks the school

board just doesn't have enough money to fix the broken toilets at his school may change his mind when he finds out the board just gave itself a big raise. This information makes a difference to him because it contradicts his illusions about the school board. To someone who is already well aware how capitalist institutions work, however, it probably wouldn't be a big deal. The bosses' patriotic and racist propaganda can provoke hatred and resistance in the working class or it can lead to demoralizatiation and weakness, depending on the working class's internal contradictions, and particularly the leadership of the party.

Something External Can Become Internal

The distinction between a system or process and its external circumstances is easy to see in many cases, but we need to point out a few complications. One is that what starts out being external can become internal. Having food is an external condition for human life, but when you eat it, some of it becomes part of your body, internal to you. This is also true of other physical and social influences. When you learn something, part of your external environment becomes internal to your thinking. People are strongly influenced by their social circumstances and relationships, by their family and their class, influences that become part of their make up. This only happens, however, because our internal organization makes it happen. Our internal organization makes us mold ourselves according to our experiences and relationships.

Which System are You Talking About?

A second complication is that almost all systems or processes exist inside of larger systems, and those larger systems can provide external circumstances for the smaller ones. This means that when we say internal contradictions are primary, we need to pay attention what system we are talking about. The working class is a system, but it is also part of the capitalist system, which is dominated by the capitalist class. The internal contradictions of the working class are the main influence on its development, but the whole capitalist system—and its sharpening contradictions—not only provides the external conditions for that development but penetrates into the working class. The internal contradictions of the capitalist system are the main influence on the development of that system, but not necessarily the biggest influence on every part of that system, including the working class. Bosses' attacks against the working class may be effective or not, depending on the internal contradictions of the working class.

Analyzing Revolution with Internal Contradictions.

Keeping your systems straight is crucial for analyzing internal contradictions correctly. How the working class develops—including the communist movement—depends mainly on the internal contradictions of the working class, and especially of the party. It is the job of communists to solve many of these internal contradictions, and produce a powerful movement, unified around an advanced line. But accomplishing that is not enough to determine whether the workers win and communism is achieved. In order for the working class to become the dominant side of the worker-capitalist contradiction, it is not enough for the working class to grow stronger. A condition external to the working class must also be present: The capitalist class must get weaker, at least for a certain period of time. In fact the communist movement needs there to be weakness on the capitalist side in order to grow strong in the first place.

The communist analysis of the internal contradictions of the capitalist system, developed by Marx, Lenin, and many others, explains why this weakening will actually happen. The internal logic of capitalism leads to ever-larger crises, particularly the crises brought on by the wars that rival capitalists must fight. Imperialist war exhausts capitalist powers, and weakens their hold on the masses, making some powers ripe for revolution and others too weak to intervene to help them, a pattern that was repeated several times in the 20th century. For the capitalist system as a whole, these crises are the product of its internal contradictions. For the revolutionary working class, however, they are external conditions favorable to working-class victory.

The internal contradictions of the working class direct its development, and the internal contradictions of the whole capitalist system determine how it changes. These two levels, the working class and the capitalist system are also linked together. As the struggle of the imperialist powers weakens them, the struggle for a revolutionary line inside the working class becomes more important, and the pressure from the bosses to cave in become stronger. Lenin's party was able to take power at the end of World War I precisely because they did not cave in, but won over a large part of the working class of Tsarist Russia to their revolutionary line.

How New Orleans was Flooded

Several overlapping levels of processes are also needed to understand the disaster in New Orleans. At one level, we have the system of the city itself. Some of New Orleans is below sea level. It has a large lake on one side and a river on the other. To keep the water out, the city has many miles of levies. This means that there is a physical contradiction in the city, with the lake and river trying to flow in and the levies trying to keep the water out. In ordinary weather, the outward push of the levies is the dominant side of the contradiction. When a big storm blows in, however, it can change the water level enough that the tendency of the water to flood the city becomes the dominant side of the contradiction. This is what happened in August, 2005, and it happened where the government had built the weakest levies, next to black working class neighborhoods. The water rose, the levies failed,

a large part of the city was flooded. If the city had been built somewhere else, or if it had had adequate levies, the storm would have done much less damage. Instead, the storm strengthened one side of New Orleans' contradiction, shifted the dominant side of that contradiction, and the city was greatly damaged as a result. Once the city began to flood, there was no evacuation and little aid, so many died, not only from the physical contradiction of the levies with the lake and the river, but from the internal social contradictions of the racist, corrupt, and incompetent city and state political system.

New Orleans was damaged mainly by its internal contradictions, but most people blamed the federal government. It's true that they were to blame, but we need to distinguish between what the cause was and who or what was to blame. New Orleans did not have the resources to resist rising water or deal with its consequences. This is a fact about the internal structure of the city, and the main cause of the disaster. The fact that the city had this screwed up internal structure was caused by its being part of a system much bigger than the city, the whole U. S. capitalist system. The fact that the levies were not reinforced, although there were many warnings over a long period of time that the next big storm would flood the city, is mainly due to the policies--especially the racist policies--of the federal government.

In most large public construction in the U. S., the federal government pays a big portion of the bill, for the simple reason they have the money that cities and states don't have. The U. S. government didn't spend the money to save New Orleans because of the internal contradictions of U. S. capitalism. U.S. capitalism did not even try to save the workers of New Orleans, either before or after the hurricane struck because the U. S. bosses are involved in a constantly sharpening rivalry with the other capitalists on the planet, and have decided to keep spending money on war and war preparations, not on the physical infrastructure of the U. S., trying to keep their dominant position in the world. The result has been unsafe roads, bridges, and dams all over the U.S., health care and education cuts, etc. Add to this is the racism of U. S. capitalist policies on all fronts. Since they knew that the people who would be hurt most by a flooded New Orleans were the city's black working class, the bosses weren't about to cut back on tanks and warplanes to save them. To understand Katrina, however, you need to keep track of the several different systems whose internal contradictions ultimately produced the disaster. The most direct and immediate cause of the destruction in New Orleans was the internal contradictions of New Orleans. The state of those contradictions, however, was mainly the result of the contradictions of the U. S. capitalist system as a whole and its inter-imperialist conflict with other capitalist powers.

Which System?

We have already seen that when you have systems inside systems, you have to use the right one, or you will not understand how internal contradictions work. Some changes in a thing should really be considered changes in a bigger system that contains it. As an example, consider a worker who is unemployed. Is this due to his or her internal contradictions? This is almost never true. Someone can be trained for a certain kind of job and have a good work record, but still not be able to find that kind of job, just because business is bad and no bosses are hiring, or because of the bosses' racism. Being employed or unemployed is part of a relationship the worker has to the capitalist system, or at least to the particular industry he or she works in. Whether he or she has a job is caused by the internal contradictions of that larger system much more than it is due to the characteristics of the individual worker.

"Overwhelming Force"

Before we turn to applications to our practical work, we should consider a common objection to "internal contradictions are primary." This objection says that there are some cases where the external influence is so overwhelming that the cause of a things' destruction must be mainly external. If someone sets off a nuclear weapon on your front porch, your house is going up in smoke, no matter what its internal structure is. The internal contradictions principle only requires, however, that internal factors are almost always the primary cause of change. There are exceptions, but they are rare. Those are cases where not only the existing internal structure, but any other structure that could have been there instead would have still resulted in destruction. Most cases where people claim that overwhelming force is present just don't hold up, however. The U. S. government did not organize an evacuation when Katrina struck, and over 1200 people were killed. When faced with hurricane Ivan, a category 5 storm in 2004, the Cuban government was able to organize a huge evacuation that resulted in no one being killed by the storm. The fact that Cuba was able to do this shows that hurricanes are not overwhelming forces, and that internal political structure can allow people to deal effectively with strong external forces, even if they can't be stopped.

Some people claimed that the downfall of the USSR in 1991 was caused mainly by external pressure of U.S. capitalism, and especially by its military spending. Revisionist writer Michael Parenti, for example, claimed that the USSR was "Pressed hard throughout its history by global capitalism's powerful financial, economic, and military forces," and was "swept away when the floodgates opened to the West."[11] This ignores the profound internal contradictions of Soviet state capitalism, which the Soviet rulers tried to resolve by moving to private ownership of capital, rather than controlling it through the party and government. Former U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig was right when he said that the end of the Cold War was caused by the internal contradictions of the USSR, and that building enormously expen-

sive "Star Wars" weapons systems and other U. S. actions were merely "catalysts" to its downfall.[12]

Contradictions of U. S. Capitalism and the Iraq War

A recent New York Times editorial claimed that the "America lost the [Vietnam] war because a succession of changes in the South Vietnamese leadership, many of them inspired by Washington, never produced an effective government in Saigon."[13] There is a grain of truth in this, since not getting their puppets to do a good job was a big problem for the U.S. capitalists in Vietnam, as it is in Iraq. The Times analysis of failure in Vietnam ignores, however, the more important causes of defeat: the internal contradictions of U. S. capitalism, and the powerful worker-peasant movement of Vietnam. On Iraq, however, the editorial does focus on the internal contradictions within U. S. imperialism, which have been greatly intensified by its failure to dominate Iraq, recommending that the U.S. face up to its failure and get over it. The result, it says, will be rebuilding its "battered armed forces" to achieve a "nation better positioned to deal with the relentless challenges of global leadership"--that is, the challenges of being the biggest imperialist on the planet. A recent article in Foreign Affairs also focuses on internal sources of U. S. failure in Iraq. It says that the U. S. must face up to its failure and must rebuild its corps of generals, who meekly backed down when the Secretary of Defense refused to allocate sufficient troops to occupy Iraq. It should get rid of the bad political leadership, incompetent political appointees, and reform the press, who "helped sell the war," the article said, and improve inter-agency cooperation and the U. S. "capacity for nation building and counterinsurgency."[14]

While the U. S. empire will probably learn something from its disaster in Iraq and make some changes, its policies are now driven by contradictions that are even bigger than those it had before the war. It needs to get out of Iraq to rebuild its military, but it can't leave the Persian Gulf. It has to stay, not only to be able to control the oil its competitors need (especially China and Europe). It must also prevent Iran, which may soon have nuclear weapons, from dominating and perhaps even conquering Saudi Arabia, with her huge oil supplies.

Developing Fascism

It is a fundamental fact about world capitalism that superpowers cannot retire. They fight to stay on top as long as possible, and finally end up as third-rate powers, like Spain, Britain, Turkey, or Portugal. War and fascism are necessary responses to the intensification of external challenges and internal weaknesses of imperial powers, as they attempt to stay on top a little longer. The U. S. now faces challenges from the Chinese economy and military, the threat of a renewed Cold War with Russia, challenges from Latin American nationalists and others who are encourage by the U. S. weaknesses that are revealed by the war in Iraq.

Trying to deal with these external challenges, U. S. fascism is developing in a number of ways. Among the most important features of developing U. S. fascism are the following:

I. Winning or trying to win the population to support war, using patriotism, fear, and racism, including anti-Arab and anti-immigrant racism, etc.

II. Misleading and oppressing potential opposition, by elections, prisons, surveillance, wiretapping, immigration raids, torture, etc.

III. Lowering the working class's standard of living to pay for war, cutting wages, welfare, pensions, Social Security, health care reimbursements, etc., and doing this in a way that particularly attacks black and Latin workers.

IV. Increased the size and capabilities of the military and building up war production industries.

V. Disciplining the capitalist ranks (Enron, Sarbanes-Oxley, Gov. Spitzer, etc.), and direct rule of capitalists over key institutions like schools (Gates and Broad foundations).

None of these are optional for the U. S. bosses. All are necessary responses to external threats and internal weaknesses of the U. S. empire. For example, much larger wars will have to be fought. McCain is singing about bombing Iran, Hillary has explicitly threatened to do it, and Obama is talking about intervention in Pakistan. Their problem is that most people are already fed up with the present wars, so patriotism, fear, and racism must be increased to try to gain support or at least tolerance of wider war. Elections are working out to be a good way for them to do this.

Since U. S. imperialism needs a bigger military, as all the presidential candidates say, and it can't produce enough or steal enough even to pay for the military it has, the bosses must drive down the worker's standard of living. You can fill in the reasons for the other features of U. S. fascism. It seems to have been true during the crises of the 1930s that U. S. capital could afford to make concessions to the working class. They can't afford it now, so fascism is their answer. Whether the U. S. can develop fascism effectively is the whole ball game for U. S. capitalism. But while the growth of fascism prepares for war, it also intensifies the internal contradictions of the U. S. capitalism, and provides opportunities for the growth of the communist movement.

Internal Contradictions and the Party's Work

We have mentioned a variety of cases that show how internal contradictions bring about change. Our

main application of this idea to our political work involves modifying contradictions through struggle. Eventually we have to resolve the worker-boss contradiction with violent revolutionary struggle. We already have some violent struggles with Nazis, cops, scabs, etc. In most of our work now, however, struggle means persistent, skillful efforts to convince people to agree with some ideas and projects, reject others, and involve themselves in struggles with us. Earlier we discussed the dialectical analysis of convincing someone: It means finding the right external influence—that is, making the right argument or finding the right practical actions that can stimulate a change in that person's thinking, given their internal contradictions. This requires persistence and skill precisely because it comes from outside, which is not the main cause of what someone thinks. We have to learn to understand how our friends and allies see things themselves, how things look to them "from the inside," to understand how to struggle effectively. Political relationships created by base-building provide key opportunities to do this.

Internal Contradictions and Struggle

The struggle of opposites is constant inside a dialectical contradiction, but many political struggles will only have a significant effect if someone deliberately decides to fight for a particular line. This kind of deliberate struggle aims at intensifying existing contradictions or shifting the balance between the contradictory sides. Because internal contradictions are the main cause of change, this kind of struggle works. We can make a difference by modifying those contradictions through deliberate struggle. This is certainly no surprise. We are used to the idea that struggle is necessary and makes a difference. But the fact that internal contradictions are primary provides a clear explanation of why struggle works, by modifying the internal contradictions of things. It is a key part of the philosophy of struggle.

Internal Contradictions and Leadership

Struggle is inseparable from leadership. When you fight for a line or an action, you a trying to exert leadership. Your leadership will be good or bad, depending on the line you struggle for, and your skill and persistence in fighting for it. Your leadership will have an effect, which can be measured by actions against racism, C/D sales, party growth, and other practical ways. In base-building, in work in reform movements, in discussions inside the party, struggle and leadership are the main things that determine whether we get a good outcome or not because of the effect of this struggle and leadership have on internal contradictions. Exercising leadership includes being willing to fight for unpopular positions. Our party's experience during the Vietnam War shows how important this is. Our attacks on nationalism, criticism of the Vietnamese leaders as revisionist, condemnation of the Paris peace talks as a sellout, all provoked howls from revisionists in the anti-war movement, but they were necessary to move forward. "Communists are trail-blazers, not camp-followers."[15]

External conditions can help us advance or they can make it tough, but they are not the main thing that determines whether the work is successful or not. Struggle can shift the dominant side of the contradiction, convince our friends, weaken capitalist ideas in reform movements, and defeat opportunist ideas in the party. This means that it is the responsibility of all comrades to learn to struggle effectively and actually do it. Leading is not just up to people in formal leadership positions.

Responsibility to Lead

Everywhere that people interact, leadership makes a decisive difference. Our party is trying to become the leader of the working class, uniting it in the fight for communism. As PLP's program Road to Revolution IV (1982) stated, "The working class requires a general staff that places the victory of communism above all other goals and that fights to make the party the leader of society." Becoming the leader of the working class will take a long and complex struggle, opposed by the bosses at every step, since the survival of capitalism depends on the capitalists being able to keep their flunkies leading the working class, so it could never win. The victory of communism can only happen if a communist party leads the working class, and does it right. That leadership can only happen if the party is unified around the right line, but that can only be achieved by an effective internal struggle. Let's consider a few examples of internal struggle from the history of the USSR.

The tremendous effort to build a socialist economy in the USSR, which began in 1929, included rapid industrialization and collectivization of agriculture. This was a critical step that allowed the Soviets to survive and defeat the Nazis. To take this step the Soviet communist party (CPSU) needed to conduct an internal struggle lasting a number of years to overcome two wrong lines. One wrong line claimed that socialism could not be constructed in the USSR, and the one other said that building socialism would be a long, gradual process, with development of heavy industry put off for many years.

The first line, that socialism in one country was impossible, was defended by Trotsky and his supporters, who claimed that "a genuine upsurge of the socialist economy in Russia will become possible only after the proletariat is victorious in the major countries of Europe."[16] Without a successful revolution in Europe, the Trotskyites claimed, the USSR would be destroyed by growing contradictions between workers and peasants, or by invasion from the outside.[17] This position was finally defeated at the CPSU party conference at the end of 1926.

The second wrong line was defended by Bukharin and his supporters. They claimed that industrialization could only take place over a long period of time, during which higher grain prices, lower taxes and more consumer goods would induce peasants, especially peasant capi-

talists (kulaks) to produce more grain and fund the build up of light industry. Collectivization of agriculture was also to be developed slowly. These positions were finally defeated in 1929.[18] Both the Trotsky and Bukharin groups refused to accept the party's decisions, and were eventually expelled for forming factions, that is, political groups inside the party that organize against the party's line.[19]

Adopting either of these two wrong lines would have prevented rapid industrialization that the USSR needed to survive. The top leaders of the CPSU, and Stalin in particular, played a decisive role in defeating these two lines. But it isn't only official leaders whose leadership can make a difference in the development of the line of the party. One example of rank-and-file initiative took place during the big push for industrialization.[20] Many industrial workers pooled their wages into "communes" and "collectives." Communes distributed wages equally or by family size, while collectives paid skilled workers somewhat more. The top leadership of the party was not happy with these arrangements, because they undermined the Soviet party's policy of "material incentive" for work. At a Party Conference in June, 1930, party leader Kaganovich attacked the "excesses" of those delegates who wanted "complete collectivization of the shops." In the following year, the party stopped the communes altogether. Looking back, we can see that the rank-and-file initiative to form communes was a big step toward communism, and it was a mistake to stop them. We know that there was an internal struggle to keep them, and it lost out. Although there isn't a lot of information available on how this struggle went, it would be wrong to say that it is just the fault of the top leaders that they came up with the wrong line. It is just as important to say that a lot of workers had the correct line, and they didn't fight hard enough or well enough to get it adopted. Internal struggle is decisive, and we will fail if we don't understand this.

Don't Rely on the External Circumstances

Some comrades don't have this perspective, but rely on external events to push us forward--or hold us back. Because of this they tend to make wrong estimates of the how the party benefits from work in big reform movements. Usually a big reform movement is a favorable condition for communist organizing, but we can't forget that external conditions are not the main thing. If we don't struggle for communist politics in the mass movement, or worse, if we have a line which conflicts with revolution, we don't advance. How many times have we knocked ourselves out in a union or an anti-war group, and come out with nothing, when the favorable circumstance was there, but the struggle for communist politics within the group was not?

We also have plenty of experience that shows that being active in mass movements has a tendency to move people to the right, as we work closely with people whose thinking is to the right of us. Although this tendency is unavoidable, giving into it is not. Reformist external influences don't have to move us to the right, provided we carry out a continuing vigorous internal struggle, in the clubs and in the party press. Instead of being moved to the right, we can move at least some of our friends in the movement to the left if we fight for the line, for the paper, etc.

Struggling Against Our Own Weaknesses

Probably the most important thing to understand about internal contradictions for our work is that our weaknesses hold us back more than external conditions. This means that without a determined struggle to overcome internal weaknesses, we will fail. But you can't struggle against weaknesses you don't know about or don't face up to, so the struggle against them requires being honest and self-critical with our comrades, our base, and the masses we are trying to win. We must not hide difficulties, mistakes and failures, and not exaggerate our victories. We must also make accurate estimates of what is possible in a given period and what is not, given our forces and the external conditions we face. Of course, we must also resist the temptation to minimize or ignore our weaknesses by over-estimating the importance of external difficulties.

Misunderstandings of "Internal Contradictions are Primary"

There are several important ways to misinterpret the ideas that internal contradictions are primary. One misinterpretation is to understand "internal contradictions are primary" subjectively, as saying that we concentrate on internal contradictions only because they are easier to do something about. In fact some external circumstances can be easier to change than internal ones. Our political work can increase the respect and agreement that people outside the party have for it, and as the party grows, it can make can make bigger changes in external circumstances. This can happen even if the party has serious internal contradictions that are hard to eliminate. In any case, it is a general principle about all change that the main cause of change is internal. We do not focus on the internal just because it is easier to work on.

Some comrades misinterpret "internal contradictions are primary" as meaning that we can accomplish anything if we just do it right.

This is not what the principle means. The extent of change can be limited by external factors. In present conditions, the party can only grow slowly, not matter how good are line is or how hard we work. This is partly a matter of the influence that capitalist ideas have over the working class, especially since the collapse of the old movement has called into question whether the working class can seize and hold power and build communism. But what we do today, including how we answer these doubts in theory as well as in practice, lays the basis for more rapid growth in the future as the objective situation

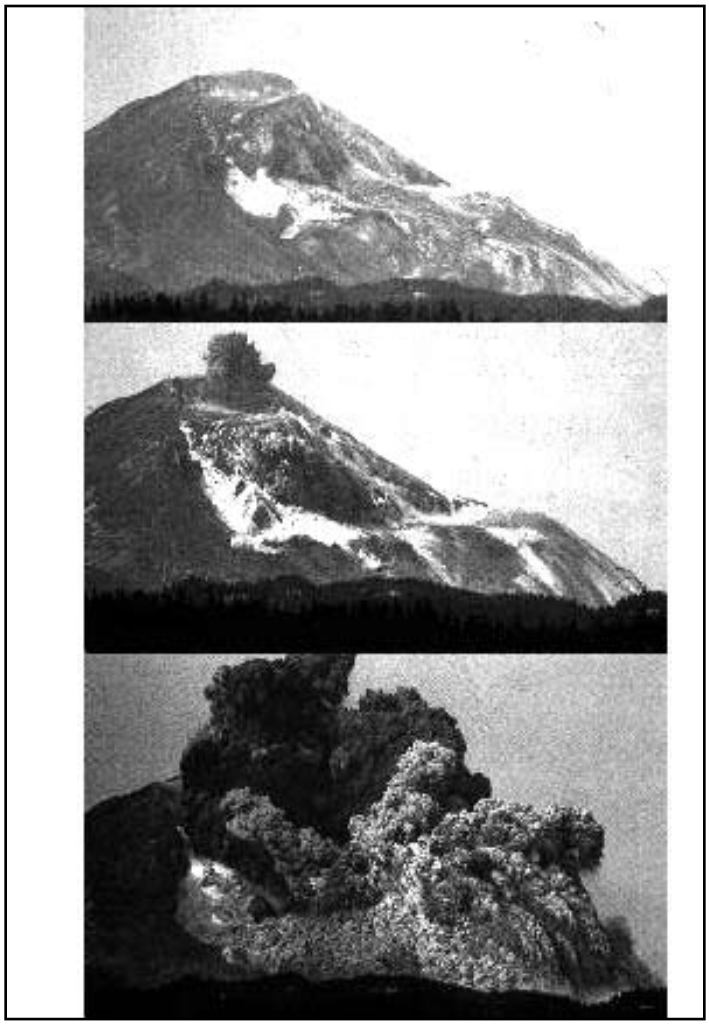
in the world changes.

Growth is also limited by conditions inside the party. Our small size limits our ability to reach people and the influence we can have on events, and it is easier to get people to join a movement that is obviously powerful already than one whose influence is still fairly small. In fact the size of the party constitutes an internal contradiction, since it contradicts the mass party that we aim for and must have to win.

Our confidence that the working class can win communism is not based on the idea that we can do anything we want to if we try hard enough, but that we can learn to do the specific things that it takes to win. That confidence must be renewed everyday by fighting for our line in the mass movement and at work, school and in the military. In this way, as we fight for our line, we influence our base and often they influence us, demanding that we do more and explain more to them and their friends. These things can expand the limits in which we operate.

The fact that we can sustain ourselves and grow in the face of growing fascism is not just a fact about dialectical logic, but about the strengths of the working class and the weaknesses of capitalism. At the moment, the political cost to the U. S. capitalists of trying to destroy the communist movement is probably too high for the bosses to pay. They have other fish to fry now. As we get to be a bigger threat, however, they will be willing to pay that price.

We prepare for that situation by growing in size and influence, especially by building a mass base for the paper. We also need to work skillfully, in a way that minimizes what the bosses know about us. It is not just dealing with the internal contradictions of the party and the working class that makes it possible to win, but also the intensifying internal contradictions of capitalism and growing anger and disillusion of the working class about them. Understanding dialectics is essential for us to understand how capitalism works and how our movement can advance, but you can only get the right answers from applying it if you also get your facts right about specific internal contradictions, both the bosses' and our own, and about the tremendous potential of the working class to create a communist future. In fact, if PLP hadn't studied dialectics, we wouldn't exist today as a revolutionary communist party.



Internal contradictions of the Mt. Saint Helens volcaino lead to explosion, May, 1980

APPENDIX I:
What is Mechanical Materialism?

Mechanics is a part of physics that deals with how things change when physical forces push or pull on them. One of the basic principles about forces is that if there is no force at all acting on something, that thing doesn't change speed or direction. In the simplest cases, mechanics does not ask what happens inside something and ignores internal forces. So, in those cases, an object will only change its speed or direction if there is an external force on it. This is the kind of case that mechanical materialism takes as a model for its philosophy of change, assuming as a basic principle that all change is caused from the outside. For certain objects and certain kinds of change, this principle works. We may be able to explain the path of a bullet fired from a gun, for example, without knowing what happens inside the bullet. If we want to understand the shape of the bullet, however, internal forces play a decisive role, and cannot be ignored. The mechanical materialist strategy for dealing with things whose internal structure can't be ignored is to imagine them as broken down into the tiniest possible particles, so that inner structure is completely done away with. Physicist Max Planck explained this strategy this way:

"We can however regard each body as composed of very many material points, and the differences in the mechanical properties of bodies can be reduced to the effects of different forces that individual points exert on each other. Thus the question of the laws of movement of material bodies is reduced to the mechanics of systems of material points."[21]

The price of this reduction of objects and even people to a collection of "material points" is that mechanical materialism must ignore the qualitatively different properties and kinds of causal relationships that occur in the different levels of organization of material reality. This is a hopelessly dead-end approach for most of science, especially the biological and social sciences.

Beginning in the 1600s, the successful development of mechanics helped make mechanical materialism an influential point of view. Although not a materialist himself, French philosopher Descartes expressed the mechanical materialist position well when he claimed that it is a law of nature that "each particular thing continues to be in the same state as long as it can, and that it only changes by encountering something else."[22] In the 1700s, French materialist philosophers extended this idea to people and societies. Baron D'Holbach claimed that people's choices are determined by causes outside them.[23] Montesquieu claimed that climate and soil largely determine the structure of societies, so that slavery, for example, is more likely to occur in very hot climates.[24]

In the 1800s, after the development of thermodynamics, the science of heat, there were many attempts to use it to prove that change must come from the outside. The argument was that every isolated system tends to equilibrium, a state of internal balance, and in that state there is no tendency to change, so any change that happens must come from the outside. Writers like H. Spencer, who were not materialists at all, also defended this idea. One big flaw in this argument is that most real systems, including people and societies, are not isolated, but must exchange matter and energy with their surroundings in order to survive.[25] Instead of using this bogus argument from physics, others, like economists Pareto and Walras, simply constructed their theories to be as similar as possible to mechanical systems.[26] As they developed the ideas of dialectical materialism, Marx and Engels showed the bigger problem with the equilibrium view, the fact that people and social systems are not in internal balance, but are moved by unresolved internal conflicts that tend to become larger (see appendix II).

In the 1900s, developments in physics and biology gradually discredited the idea that everything is to be explained by particles exerting forces on each other, so that change would come from the outside. Even so, mechanical materialism continued to be defended by many philosophers and scientists, and by pro-capitalist economists, anthropologists, geographers, etc., who want to try to prove that class struggle does not determine social development. Typical of a large portion of capitalist economic thought, economist Paul Samuelson claimed "Within the framework of any system the relationships between our variables are strictly those of mutual interdependence.... The only sense in which the use of the term causation is admissible is in respect to changes in external data or parameters."[27] Trying to replace dialectical materialism, anthropologist Marvin Harris' "cultural materialism" claimed that environmental and biological factors external to human society determine human culture, for example, that the Aztecs practiced human sacrifice because there was a shortage of protein in central Mexico.[28] Jared Diamond's Guns, Germs, Steel: The Fates of Human Societies, later a PBS TV series, claimed that the most important features of human societies are determined by their physical and biological environment.[29] Thus mechanical materialism remains an important trend in capitalist philosophy and pseudo-science.

APPENDIX II:
Some History of "Internal Contradictions are Primary"

Prior to Marx and Engels, the most important contributions to the development of dialectics came from the German philosopher G. F. W. Hegel. We note here some of Hegel's comments on the role of internal contradictions.

"Negativity," that is, the struggle of opposites, Hegel wrote, is the "the internal source of all activity, vital and spiritual self-movement, the dialectical soul which all truth has in it and through which it alone is the truth." In his own notes, Lenin described this passage as "the kernel of dialectics."[30] Other comments by Hegel express similar ideas: "contradiction is the root of all movement and vitality; it is only in so far as something has a contradiction within it that it moves, has an urge and activity."[31] "This inner contradiction of the concrete is itself the driving force of development."[32]

Marx and Engels make many applications of the idea that things develop because of their internal contradictions. Their fundamental principle that class struggle drives the development of class society, that "All history of hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles,"[33] illustrates this idea since classes are the opposing sides of contradictions inside society. Marx's analysis of commodity production and capitalist society is another clear example of causation by inner contradictions, since he shows how the development of the capitalist system is a result of its internal contradictions, in particular, the contradictory nature of commodities. "The inner opposition of use value and value wrapped up inside commodities," he wrote, "is thus expressed through an external opposition, that is, through a relation which holds between two commodities, one commodity whose value is to be directly expressed only as use value, and another commodity in which value is directly expressed only as exchange value."[34] Commodity production eventually becomes transformed into capitalist production, and at that stage "the laws of appropriation or of private property, laws that are based on the production and circulation of commodities, become by their own inner and inexorable dialectic changed into their opposite."[35]

More importantly, the fundamental internal contradictions of capitalism tend to become more intense:

"This internal contradiction [between capitalists' drive to expand production and their need to limit workers' consumption] seeks to resolve itself through expansion of the outlying field of production. But the more the productive power develops, the more it finds itself at variance with the narrow basis on which the conditions of consumption rest. It is no contradiction at all that on this self-contradictory

basis, there should be an excess of capital simultaneously with a growing surplus of population. For while a combination of these two would, indeed, increase the mass of produced surplus value, it would at the same time intensify the contradiction between the conditions under which this surplus value is produced and those under which it is realized. "[36]

This intensification sets limits on the future development of capitalism, or as Marx puts it, "The real barrier of capitalist production is capital itself."[37] As Engels summed the matter up,

"Capitalist production being a transitory economical phase, is full of internal contradictions which develop and become evident in proportion as it develops."[38]

When discussing the development of the party by internal struggle, Engels makes the point that this is a general principle of dialectics:

"It seems that any workers' party of a big country can develop only through internal struggle, as indeed has been generally established in the dialectical laws of development."[39]

Throughout the 1920s, Soviet philosophers struggled against mechanical materialism. By the early 1930s, they had defeated mechanical views and produced a series of party dialectics texts that included emphasis on the primary role of the internal:

"[According to the dialectical materialist viewpoint,] the causes of development are not found outside a process but inside it, the main attention is directed at revealing the source of the 'self-development' of a process. From this point of view, knowing a process means revealing its contradictory sides, establishing their mutual relations, and tracing the movement of its contradictions. This viewpoint gives the key to 'jumps,' shows the transformation of the process into its opposite, and explains the destruction of the old and the origin of the new.... Not only social phenomena, but all phenomena of objective reality develop in an internally contradictory way." [40]

Developing the ideas of the Soviet textbooks further, Mao Zedong gave a classic presentation of the idea that internal contradictions are primary in 1937 in his essay "On Contradiction," where he wrote:

"The fundamental cause of the development of a thing is not external but internal; it lies in the contradictoriness within the thing. There is internal contradiction in every single thing, hence its motion and development. Contradictoriness within a thing is the fundamental cause of its development, while its interrelations and interactions with other things are secondary causes."[41]

In 1938, Stalin wrote that "development takes place by way of the uncovering of inner contradictions,"[42] but he did not explicitly discuss the relative importance of internal contradictions and external circumstances.

Later Soviet philosophy often supported the internal contrdictioncontradiction principle explicitly. One influential author from 1952 declared that

"In each process, internal and external opposites are interlaced, connected with one another, and interact with each other. But inner contradictions and the struggle to overcome them are basic and decisive. This struggle is the main moving force of all development and all movement."[43]

After the restoration of capitalism in the USSR in the 1960s, when Soviet philosophers began to defend opportunist positions on the resolution of social contradictions, they often continued to defend the primacy of internal contradictions. One text stated, for example, that "it is the internal contradictions that play the decisive part in all development."[44]

In its press and its internal study of dialectics, PLP has taught internal contradictions are primary for many years. For an earlier discussion, see the PLP pamphlet JAILBREAK! An Introduction to Dialectical Materialism.

NOTES

1. Lenin made this point back in World War I: "the strength of these participants in the division [of the world among imperial powers] does not change to an equal degree, for the even development of different undertakings, trusts, branches of industry, or countries is impossible under capitalism. ... Is it 'conceivable' that in ten or twenty years' time the relative strength of the imperialist powers will have remained unchanged? It is out of the question." Imperialism, the Highest State of Capitalism, Chapter 9.

2. A. J. Ayer, The Central Questions of Philosophy, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973, p. 180. Lenin gives many examples of views like this in his 1908 book Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, V. I. Lenin Collected Works, Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1962, vol. 14, pp. 158ff.

3. N. R. Hanson, Patterns of Discovery: An Inquiry into the Conceptual Foundations of Science, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958, p. 64.

4. Ernest Sosa, "Putnam's Pragmatic Realism," The Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 90, No. 12. (Dec., 1993), p. 607.

[5] About one-third of the world's population has been infected with TB. "5-10% of people who are infected with TB bacilli (but who are not infected with HIV) become sick or infectious at some time during their life." World Health Organization website: http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs104/en/

[6] See "Anti-Vietnam War Era Big Leap Forward for PL, *Challenge/Desafio*, August 1, 2007.

[7] We know that there were revolutionaries in China in the late 1960s who got this right, because their "one revolution" view was attacked in the famous leftist manifesto "Whither China?" written about 1968.

[8] V. I. Lenin, "On the Question of Dialectics, *Collected Works*, Moscow, 1961, vol. 38, p. 360.

[9] A famous example from Mao Zedong makes a similar point: a fertilized egg can be turned into a baby chick by its inner contradictions, which are chemical processes in this case. These processes require oxygen and a specific range of temperatures in order to operate. But for the inner contradictions of some other system—a rock for instance--oxygen and temperature may have no effect, and certainly will not help turn the rock into a baby chick. You can try any combination of oxygen and temperature you want, but it won't produce a chick from a rock, because the right internal contradictions aren't there.

[10] A physical example is a planet orbiting around the Sun. Most of the changes in the planet will be due primarily to its internal contradictions, but changes in its orbit around the Sun may not be. That orbit depends on the relationships between the planet, the Sun, and the other planets, so changes in the orbit can be due to the internal contradictions of the solar system, not just the planet. In both cases, what seemed at first sight to be a characteristic of one thing is actually a characteristic of a larger system that it fits inside of, and the internal contradictions of that system mainly determine its properties.

[11] M. Parenti, *Blackshirts and Reds: Rational Fascism and the Overthrow of Communism*, San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1997, p. 75.

[12] 1999 PBS interview with Alexander Haig, http://www.pbs.org/redfiles/prop/deep/interv/p_int_alexander_haig.htm

[13] "The Problem Isn't Mr. Maliki," New York Times, August 24, 2007.

[14] James Dobbins, "Who Lost Iraq? Lessons for the Debacle," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October, 2007.

[15] See "Anti-Vietnam War Era Big Leap Forward for PL, *Challenge/Desafio*, August 1, 2007.

[16] Quoted in Fifteenth Conference of the CPSU(B), "Resolution 'On the Opposition Bloc in the CPSU(B)'," October 26 – November 3, 1926, reprinted in *Against Trotskyism: The Struggle of Lenin and the CPSU Against Trotskyism. A Collection of Documents*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972, p. 262.

[17] On Trotsky's claims, see M. J. Olgin, *Trotskyism: Counter Revolution in Disguise*, New York: Workers' Library Publishers, 1935, reprinted San Francisco: Proletarian Publishers, n. d., pp. 50-65.

[18] On the claims and the ultimate defeat of Bukharin group, see F. M Vaganov, *Pravyi uklon v VKP(B) i ego razgrom (1928-1930)*, Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 2nd ed., 1977, chaps 5 and 6.

[19] See Fifteenth Conference of the CPSU(B), "Resolution 'On the Opposition Bloc in the CPSU(B)'," and "Decision 'On the Expulsion of Zinoviev and Trotsky from the CC CPSU(B)'," *Against Trotskyism*, pp. 259-272, and 281-282. On the factionalism of Bukharin and his allies, see the decision of the CPSU Central Committee, November 17, 1929, "O gruppe t. Bukharina," in V. P. Danilov, et. al., eds., *Kak Lomali NEP. Stenogrammy Plenumov TsK VKP(B) 1928-1929 gg.*, Moscow: MFD, 2000, vol. 5, pp. 543-4.

[20] See "In the 1930's Soviet Union, Many Workers Organized for Communism Rather than Socialism," *Challenge/Desafio*, August 1, 2006.

[21] Max Planck, *Einführung in die Allgemeine Mechanik*, Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 2nd ed., 1920, p. 105.

[22] *Principles of Philosophy*, Part II, Article 37, in Victor Cousin, ed., Oeuvres de Descartes, Paris: F. G. Levrauld Librarie, 1824, vol. III, p. 152.

[23] "The will of man is secretly moved or determined by some exterior cause that produces change in him." P. H. Thiry, Baron d'Holbach, *System of Nature*, London: T. Davison, 1820, vol. 1, p. 18.

[24] "… the excess of heat enervates the body, and … nothing but the fear of chastisement can oblige them to perform any laborious duty: slavery is there more reconcilable to reason." Quoted in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/montesquieu/#4.3

[25] See C. E. Russett, *The Concept of Equilibrium in American Social Thought*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966, chapters 2 and 3.

[26] B. Ingrao and G. Israel, Economic *Equilibrium in the History of Science*, Cambridge: M. I. T. Press, 1990, chapters 4 – 7.

[27] *Foundations of Economic Analysis*, enlarged edition, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983, p. 9.

[28] *Cannibals and Kings: The Origins of Cultures*, New York: Random House, 1977, pp. 164-166. See the critique by P. Diener, K. Moore and R. Mutagh, "Meat, Markets, And Mechanical Materialism: The Great Protein Fiasco In Anthropology," *Dialectical Anthropology* 5 (1980) pp. 171-180.

[29] New York: Norton, 1999. See the critique by James M. Blaut, "Environmentalism and Eurocentrism," *The Geographical Review*, July 1999, Vol. 89 (3), pp. 391-408.

[30] V. I. Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's Science of Logic," *Collected Works*, Moscow, 1961, vol. 38, p. 229.

[31] G. F. W. Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*, A. V. Miller, trans., Atlantic Highlands, 1969, p. 439.

[32] G. F. W. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, Stutgartt, 1970, vol. 18, p. 44.

[33] K. Marx and F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in *Marx Engels Collected Works*, New York, 1976, vol. 6, p. 484.

[34] K. Marx, *Das Kapital*, Bd. I, in *Marx Engels Werke*, Berlin, 1956, vol. 23, p. 75-76; Cf. Capital, vol. I, in *Marx Engels Collected Works*, New York, 1976, vol. 35, p. 71.

[35] F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, quoting Marx, in *Marx Engels Collected Works*, New York, 1976, vol. 25, p. 150.

[36] Marx, *Capital*, vol. III, in *Marx Engels Collected Works*, vol. 37, p. 243.

[37] ibid., p. 248.

[38] F. Engels to N. Danielson, September 22, 1892, in *Marx Engels Collected Works*, vol. 49, p. 537.

[39] F. Engels to E. Bernstein in Zurich, October 20, 1882, in *Marx Engels Collected Works*, vol. 46, p. 342, emphasis added. See also F. Engels to P. Lafarge, October 30, 1882, ibid., pp. 350-1.

[40] A. Aisenberg, et. al., eds., *Dialekticheskii materializm*, Leningrad : OGIZ-Priboi,1931, pp. 161, 164.

[41] Mao Zedong, "On Contradiction," *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, Beijing, 1965, vol. I, p. 313.

[42] J. V. Stalin, "Dialectical and Historical Materialism," *Sochineniia*, Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Pisatel'," 1997, vol. 14, p. 258.

[43] M. M. Rosenthal, *Marksistiskii Dialeticheskii Metod*, Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Political Literature, 1952, p. 268.

[44] A. Spirkin, O. Yaknot, *The Basic Principles of Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971, p. 63.

"Antagonistic and Non-Antagonistic" Contradictions

March, 2004 - Revised

The most important idea in communist philosophy is the concept of dialectical contradiction. The theory of contradiction is an indispensable guide to understanding the development of society, political movements, knowledge and nature. Failure to understand the dialectics of contradiction correctly has held back the development of the communist movement and contributed to the victory of capitalism in the old Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and China. This essay describes the history of a false and extremely harmful conception of contradiction that was invented in the Soviet Union and made worse in China, the concept of a "non-antagonistic contradiction." This kind of contradiction was supposed to describe social conflicts in socialist society that either die out on their own or can be managed without becoming more intense. We will trace the history of this concept and show the theoretical errors in its various formulations and the disastrous practical policies and actions that it helped justify. First, however, we will review the concept of dialectical contradiction as it was described by Marx in some of the classics of communist philosophy, as well as some of the reactionary alternatives to communist dialectics.

Dialectical Contradiction

To explain what a dialectical contradiction is, we will use the terminology of "organic" relationships, borrowed by Marx from German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel. Things are said to be organically related (or internally related) when the nature of each of them is partly determined by its relationship to another. For example, since both a child and its parents are influenced in fundamental ways by the parent-child relationship, that relationship is an organic one. A child with different parents would be a different person, and a child separated from its parents a birth would be a different person, since their organic relationship would be broken. The things that are linked together in an organic relationship are called sides or moments. Because of the mutual connection of the sides, we say that they interpenetrate each other.

When there are two organically related things, each of which has properties that exclude the other, the relationship between them is called opposition. The relationship between the north and south poles of a magnet is an example this kind of opposition, which is sometimes called polar opposition. A north pole cannot exist without a south pole and vice versa, but nothing can be both a north and a south pole.

A dialectical contradiction is a polar opposition in which the two sides actively interfere with each other. This active interference is called "struggle of opposites" or "negativity." Hence we could define a dialectical contradiction as an organic relationship of opposites in which the opposites struggle against each other, a unity and struggle of opposites. This concept of dialectical contradiction is different from contradiction in the ordinary sense of saying one thing and then saying something else that is inconsistent with it, although the two concepts have features in common. In particular, ordinary contradictions only occur in thought or language, while dialectical contradictions also occur in the social or natural world.

One example of a dialectical contradiction is a basketball game. The polar opposites are the two teams. Each of the teams not only tries to score, but plays defense. They blocks shots, prevent passes, and steal the ball, etc., to interfere with the opponent's game. This interference is part of the negativity of the contradiction, the struggle of the opposite sides. If either side strengthens its offense or its defense, the contradiction becomes more intense.

The most important example of a dialectical contradiction is the relationship between the working class and the capitalist class in the capitalist system. Each class has the characteristics it has partly because of its relationship to the other, but the two classes struggle and interfere with each other.

In his book Capital, Marx gave a description of the contradictory relation between use value and exchange value, the two forms in which the value of a product is expressed in a capitalist economy. His description also gives an accurate definition of dialectical contradiction in general. The two sides of the relationship are

> "…two mutually conditioning, inseparable moments which belong to each other, but are at the same time mutually excluding, actively opposing extremes, that is, poles of the that value expression."

The main reason contradictions are important is that they produce movement and change. For example, in the process of the exchange of products, contradictory conditions have to be met, conditions that capitalist commodity circulation does not lessen or cancel out. These contradictions "create a form in which they can move themselves. This is the general method by which actual contradictions solve themselves." Contradictions "move themselves" because the activity of the struggling opposite sides within the contradiction is directed into motion as the contradiction is worked out. That is, the source of the motion that the contradiction causes is internal to that contradiction.

This process of solving or working out contradictions is not unique to social contradictions, but also takes place in thought and in the natural world. As an example of a how a contradiction can direct motion into a particular path, Marx cited the elliptical curve in space, which is approximately the path a planet takes as it moves

around the Sun. The planet's two tendencies of motion, to continue in a straight line and to be pulled by gravity toward the Sun do not cancel out, but produce a kind of motion that is influenced by both tendencies.

The process of working through the motion that a contradiction causes eventually comes to an end, usually when one or more of the contradictory opposites no longer exists. This process of ending a contradiction is called resolving, overcoming, or dissolving it. The most important example of the working out of a contradiction is the struggle of the working class against the capitalist class. This contradiction will eventually be resolved by revolution and the establishment of communism. But the destruction of capitalism is only one example of the general pattern of the resolution of contradictions. The contradiction in a basketball game is resolved when the buzzer sounds and the game is over. For capitalists in competition with each other, and capitalist empires in conflict with each other, however, their dialectical contradictions tend to be come more acute. These contradictions drive then toward war and fascism, and are only resolved when one or both sides are destroyed.

Marx regarded dialectics--that is, the theory of dialectical contradictions and the development that they cause--to be "in its essence critical and revolutionary," because it recognizes "the inevitable breaking up" of the existing state of things. There are rivals to revolutionary dialectics, however, that are designed to conclude not that the political, economic, and military contradictions of capitalism will sharpen and make it more ripe for revolution, but that capitalism will become more harmonious and stable, and less prone to crisis. One of these rival views was developed by 19th century defenders of capitalism and adopted by Social-Democrats (anti-communist "Leftists"), and by an influential group of philosophers--called "mechanists"--in the Soviet Union in the 1920s.

Mechanist "Dialectics"

The model for the mechanist view of contradiction is the clash of physical forces, forces which can cancel each other out if they are aimed in opposite directions. This happens, for example, if two teams pull on each end of a rope in a tug-of-war. The rope will not move at all if the force pulling on one side is equal to the force on the other. British sociologist Herbert Spencer claimed that so-called social or mental "forces" also tend to cancel out, resulting in a kind of social balance or equilibrium in which further change cannot happen. Spencer claimed that everything is moved by "antagonist forces," that is, "forces" which are aimed in opposite directions:

> "In all cases then there is a progress toward equilibration. That universal co-existence of antagonist forces ....[that] necessitates decomposition of every force into divergent forces at the same time necessitates the ultimate establishment of a balance....

This theory has the consequence that capitalism not only has no tendency toward crises that provide the potential for revolution, but that its internal conflicts tend to gradually balance out and disappear. From the 1870s on, Social-Democrats like E. Bernstein, M. Adler, and K. E. Dühring attacked Marx's dialectics and praised mechanist views like Spencer's. Marx's collaborator F. Engels attacked mechanist "dialectics" in his book Anti-Dühring, but unfortunately that did not assure the adoption of the dialectical point of view, even inside the communist movement.

In the USSR, the influential leader N. Bukharin defended the mechanist idea that contradiction is "the antagonism of forces acting in different directions," rather than a unity of opposites that interpenetrate each other. Mechanists saw contradiction as the product of "forces" which may not have any organic, internal relationship to one another, and can thus cancel each other out partially or completely.

The mechanist understanding of contradiction is wrong many counts. It implies that one side of a contradiction could be removed without changing the other at all, since the two sides are not organically connected. In that case, for example, the removal of the capitalist class by revolution would not have to make the working class change, too.

In this non-organic, "external" way of understanding contradiction, every contradiction would automatically be "antagonistic" because the mechanist definition of contradiction requires that every contradiction consist of antagonistic forces, that is, forces that push in opposite directions. It is a mystery what "antagonism" could possibly mean, however, when you go beyond physical forces (which point in definite directions) to "forces" which are social or natural processes.

A more important defect of the mechanist view is the idea that there is no negativity or struggle of opposites inside a contraction that makes it produce movement. That would mean that all change would be caused from the outside, a claim that Bukharin makes explicitly. This view flatly contradicts the Marxist idea that class struggles, which are conflicts inside society, are what make history develop. The mechanist view also fails to understand the dialectical relationship between capitalists, whose competitive, "struggle of opposites" relationship with each other drives them to imperialist war. The U. S. wars against Iraq, for example, do not just aim to get access to the oil for the giant U. S. oil companies, but also to hold back European and Chinese capitalists by controlling the oil they need.

The most important error of the mechanist version of contradiction is that it implies that powerful opponents can make peace with each other if their opposite "forces" cancel each other out. Bukharin argued, for example, that agreement between imperialist powers is possible without one defeating the other when there is "equality of forces." Hence what the mechanists called 'antagonism' really implies the possibility of reconciliation, that is, of opposite "forces" canceling out. The supposed tendency of these "forces" to balance out would mean that contradictions tend to die out on their own, as Spencer claimed in so many words.

Communist dialectics, on the contrary, recognizes that the contradictions of imperialism always produce intense struggle, eventually leading to war, whether

the rival imperialists are equally matched or not. Even when imperialists are not directly at war with each other, they sponsor intermediaries to fight for them. This took place, for example, when the U. S. armed the Islamic fundamentalists to overthrow the USSR's puppet government in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Hegelian dialectics and mediation

Mechanism is not the only theory of contradiction that tries to argue that contradictions don't have to become more intense. German idealist philosopher G. F. W. Hegel thought that the struggle of the opposites in a contradiction could and should be lessened by "mediating" them, that is, adding additional links ("mediations") between the opposite sides so that they interfere with each other less. Hegel claimed for example, that the government could mediate the contradictions of a capitalist economy, and that the legislature could mediate between the head of state and the people.

These examples already show the absurdity of idea that contradictions can always be effectively mediated. Despite the best efforts of the Federal Reserve Board and other government bodies in the U. S., the internal contradictions of the capitalist economy drive it into recession and crisis roughly every eight years. The impeachment attempts in the Clinton administration show that a legislature can increase the contradictions between the head of state and the general public, but is not effective in mediating them in capitalist society.

Marx argued that contradictions can be mediated only in the limited situation where the two sides are essentially unified in the first place, when they belong together but have come into contradiction with each other. "Real extremes," he said, "cannot be mediated precisely because they are real extremes... they are opposed in essence." Marx criticized Hegel for maintaining that intensifying the struggle of opposites, having them "fight to a decision," was "something possibly to be prevented or something harmful."

"Unity is Conditional, Struggle is Absolute"

The central idea of the Hegelian strategy for reconciling contradictions is that the whole, which is created or strengthened by adding mediating links between opposite sides, dominates the opposite sides inside it and reduces the intensity of their struggle. Another way of saying this is that in an organic relation, the unity of opposites always is or can be made to be stronger, more effective, than the struggle of opposites. The truth is just the opposite of this. The typical behavior of a dialectical contradiction is that struggle of opposites eventually dominates their unity. As Lenin described it:

> "The unity (coincidence, identity, equal actions) of opposites is conditional, temporary, transitory, relative. The struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute, just as development and motion are absolute."

Against this communist viewpoint, a practical version of this philosophy of mediation is often advocated by liberal politicians, trade union leaders, and various fake leftists, who want to mediate contradictions between the working class and the capitalists, contradictions which cannot be mediated in fact, and should be intensified instead. "Opportunism" in politics could be defined pretty accurately in just these terms: it means trying to mediate the essential contradictions of capitalism, rather than intensifying them.

Even when individuals or groups do have strong common interests, that does not mean that there will be no contradictions or that those contradictions will not become more intense. Their differences in interest or viewpoint can make their conflicts grow, despite what they have in common.

What "Antagonism" Means

We have already seen that the mechanist account of contradiction uses the term 'antagonism.' We will also be using this term later in other contexts. Thus it is useful to ask what this term means outside the mechanists confused used of it. As Marx used the term, 'antagonism' means the social relationship between enemies. It describes situations that tend to produce open conflict, anger, resistance, rebellion, violence, repression, revolution, etc. This is the sense in which Marx claimed that capitalism is the last antagonistic form of social production:

> "The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production–antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism but of an antagonism that emanates from individuals' social conditions of existence–but the productive forces developed within bourgeois society create also the material conditions for a solution of this antagonism."

This sense of the term 'antagonistic' only makes sense for social relationships, and cannot be applied to the dialectics of knowledge or to natural science. The Bolsheviks (the communists of the old USSR) started to use the term "non-antagonistic contradiction" as a category of dialectics about 1930, and they also used its political counterpart, the concept of a "non-antagonistic class relationship." By 1936, they had declared that "there are no longer any antagonistic classes in [Soviet] society" and that economic and political contradictions among the working class, the peasantry, and the intelligentsia were "declining and becoming obliterated."

In order to understand what is wrong with the concept of non-antagonistic contradiction, it is essential to understand what was wrong with the idea of "non-antagonistic classes," which is the key idea in the concept of socialism. The Bolsheviks had the idea that socialism was to be a system in which classes still existed and were in contradiction to each other, but the relationships between these classes were to be gradually increasing cooperation and harmony, based on their common interests. V. I. Lenin, the main leader of the Bolsheviks until his death in 1924, wrote that

> "Antagonism and contradiction are not at all the same thing. In socialism, the first [that is, antagonism] will disappear, but the latter [that is, contradiction] will remain."

The first of these two statements is true if antagonism is understood--as it should be--as the relation between enemies. Since there are contradictions between friends, and even contradictions that have nothing to do with people at all, antagonism and contradiction certainly are not the same thing.

The second statement—that antagonism will disappear under socialism--is false, however. It was proved false by the historical experience of socialism in the USSR and China. Socialism was an antagonistic system, a system containing capitalist social relations. As it was practiced in the USSR and in China before capitalism was restored in those countries, socialism was a compromise between the working class and the capitalists that kept many features of capitalism: working for wages and the inequality that goes with it, the division between manual and mental workers, material privileges for leaders, etc. Along with tremendous economic and social achievements, and a heroic struggle that defeated Nazism, both countries had violent, "antagonistic" internal struggles--collectivization and the "purges" in the USSR, and the Cultural Revolution in China--as well as other political, philosophical, and artistic battles over capitalist ideology.

Both the Soviet and Chinese communist parties failed, however, to fight crucial battles against capitalist ideology that justified inequality, privileges, and toleration of private ownership. The capitalist features of socialism constantly regenerated and reinforced capitalist social relationships and eventually led to the restoration of capitalism in both countries. The primary vehicles for this restoration in both cases were the Soviet and Chinese communist Parties, which by then had turned into their opposites, that is, into capitalist parties. If these old movements had fought for communism right after coming to power, they would have eliminated a main source of capitalist relationships, and probably could have kept capitalism from coming back. Even if they had done this, however, the struggle to finally overcome capitalism and its ideas would have been long and hard, and would still have involved the bloody external battles against other, capitalist countries that actually took place. Communist revolution and the initial seizure of state power are only the first steps in a long struggle to defeat the ideology of capitalism and destroy capitalist antagonisms forever. Even when this battle finally succeeds, other contradictions in society will still remain, however, contradictions that will become intense.

To understand how the idea of non-antagonistic classes and contradictions was developed, we need to review some additional events from Soviet history. A few years after the Soviet communist movement was victorious in the 1917 revolution, the Bolsheviks decided to respond to the desperate economic situation, which had resulted from the long civil war, by making major concessions to capitalists in the so-called New Economic Policy (NEP). The NEP meant that from 1921 until the 1930s, the Bolsheviks allowed capitalist relationships to continue to exist in the countryside and, on a smaller scale, in the towns. "Kulaks," who were peasant capitalists who exploited labor, and urban businesses were allowed to exist but were heavily taxed. Those peasants other than the kulak capitalists were correctly declared to be the allies of the working class, although in contradiction to it. The working class had conflicts with the non-kulak peasants, for example, over the question of whether the price of what the peasants produce should be high or low. High prices would benefit the peasants, but hurt the working class and hold back the development of industry.

Bukharin's line on the kulaks was that the working class should be nice to them. It was not necessary to defeat them, Bukharin claimed, since the kulak "nests" would "grow into" the socialist economy and the kulaks "will have to submit to our general system." This is another illustration of the mechanist idea that conflicts tend to die out on their own. In the late 1920s, the Bolshevik leadership came to the opposite conclusion. They began to understand that as a result of the NEP's concessions to capitalism, the kulaks had grown stronger, were actively resisting the Soviet government, and would have to be eliminated as a social class. One of the problems that they faced when they "liquidated the kulaks as a class" was the danger of alienating the large number of peasants who were not categorized as kulaks, but still made their living as small business owners. The Bolsheviks tried to solve this problem by distinguishing sharply (and somewhat artificially) between the exploiting kulaks and the "middle peasantry," which did not exploit labor or did so only in a limited way.

As part of the policy of attacking the kulaks while reassuring the other peasants, the Bolsheviks declared the contradictions between the working class and the poor- and middle peasants to be "non-antagonistic," while the contradictions between the working class and the kulaks were called "antagonistic:"

> But not all contradictions are antagonistic.... The relation of the proletariat and the peasantry does not have the character of antagonism–in both classes, we have a number of common interests."

Bolshevik philosophers made a number of attempts to define what an antagonistic contradiction was supposed to be. Various proposed definitions claimed that antagonistic contradictions were those that were resolved by becoming more intense, or by violence, or by the two sides becoming independent of each other. Some of the definitions were quite complicated. The main characteristic that was supposed to distinguish antagonistic from non-antagonistic contradictions was the way in which these contradictions were to be resolved. Antagonistic contradictions, like those between capitalists and the working class, were supposed to be "irreconcilable," so that they could only be resolved by revolution. But this was a mistake: All contradictions are irreconcilable, not matter how they are resolved. It is the mutual exclusion of the two sides that makes them contradictions in the first place.

Non-antagonistic contradictions were claimed to be capable of being resolved gradually, without becoming more intense, under the leadership of the party:

> "Because of their non-antagonistic character, and thanks to the correct politics of the party, the contradictions between the working class and the laboring peasantry are being abolished and are disappearing. In this way, there are before us examples of two completely opposite types of contradictions. They are different in their content, in their form, in the tendencies of their development, and finally, in the character of their resolution."

This claim, that class contradictions can die out gradually, was a big change in the Bolsheviks' line from the earlier period when they were struggling against the kulaks. Stalin in particular had insisted that intense class struggle must remain until all classes are abolished:

> As long as classes exist we shall never be in a position to say: "Well, thank God, everything is all right now." ... that which is dying refuses to die quietly; it fights for its existence, defends its moribund cause. But that which is being born does not come into the world quietly; it comes in squealing and screaming, defending its right to existence."

In the course of the fight to collectivize agriculture, however, the Bolsheviks abandoned this correct line and invented the "non-antagonistic" contradiction, the class contradiction that does "die quietly." The historical evidence shows that the claim that contradictions could be resolved gradually and without out becoming more intense is simply false. In fact, the various contradictions between the working class and the peasants were never fully resolved in the Soviet system, and the methods for attempting to resolve them included—and had to include—class struggle that sometimes became intense, with the usual signs of antagonism that go with class struggle. It was not, however, the worker-peasant contradictions that led to the restoration of capitalism in the USSR under Khrushchev, or finally brought about its destruction.

Non-Antagonistic Contradiction and "Socialist" Dialectics

In the passages quoted above, the alleged distinction between antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions is a compromise between the revolutionary dialectics of Marx and a concept of contradiction that accommodates itself to capitalism. That is, it combines the incompatible ideas that contradictions can and should be resolved by intensifying them, and the idea that they will die out on their own or can be gradually managed out of existence.

In one way, the non-antagonism theory resembles the mechanist view, since it says that the contradictions between the working class and the working peasantry had a tendency to die out gradually. Advocates of the non-antagonism view did not claim, however, that these contradictions would die out entirely by themselves, but only under the proper management by the Communist Party. In effect, it was the party, not merely the common interests of the workers and peasants, which was supposed to be the mediating link that made their contradictions become less intense, a view more like Hegel's than Bukharin's.

The advocates of the non-antagonism theory also denied the mechanist view that moving toward equilibrium or reconciliation brings about development. They correctly claimed that only the struggle of opposites produces change. In fact, the idea of several kinds of contradictions with radically different courses of development was developed in the USSR by both mechanists and Hegelians. Bukharin advocated the idea of two kinds of contradiction as early as 1926, and Soviet followers of Hegel (the so-called Menshevizing Idealists) developed their version, which became the official line of the Bolsheviks in the early thirties. Stalin was also an active advocate of the non-antagonism idea, arguing that unlike worker-capitalist contradictions, the contradictions in the collective farms …[are] bound to disappear in the course of time" as the farms obtained more machinery.

Since philosophical ideas are closely connected with political ones, the philosophical compromise between incompatible views of contradiction is just what should be expected to arise under socialism. Socialism was a compromise between capitalism and communism, an attempt to combine irreconcilable systems that was bound to fail and did fail. The concept of non-antagonistic contradiction is the heart of a socialist "dialectics," a bogus philosophy that tries to defend socialism's impossible combination of working class power with capitalist social relations, and claims that that system can work, that it won't be split apart by its increasingly intense contradictions.

In the USSR and China, the theory of non-antagonistic contradiction undermined the struggle for communism by claiming the inequalities and conflicts of socialism aren't destructive, don't need to be struggled against, but will die out by themselves. It continues to do harm in the contemporary communist movement, claiming that when people have common interests, their contradictions die out. The truth is the opposite: only resolute internal struggle moves the communist movement forward, resolving its contradictions by intensifying them.

The Chinese Communist Version of "Non-Antagonistic" Contradiction

As the theory of non-antagonistic contradictions was developed further in the communist movement, it got worse. The only virtue of the concept of non-antagonistic contradiction as this was developed in the USSR in the 1930s was that it did assert that the contradictions between capitalists and workers are antagonistic, and must be resolved by revolution. We will see how this correct theory was undermined in practice, however. Policies of the communist movement like the Popular Front (discussed below) amounted to an alliance among those who were supposed to be in antagonistic contradiction with one another. The version of the theory of non-antagonistic contradictions that was developed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) included several new features designed to justify these alliances.

The first change was that the CCP claimed that non-

antagonistic contradictions could become antagonistic, and vice-versa:

> "In accordance with the concrete development of things, some contradictions which were originally non-antagonistic develop into antagonistic ones, while others which were originally antagonistic develop into non-antagonistic ones."

The aim of this formulation was to be able to declare that contradictions between workers and capitalists could become non-antagonistic. The contradictions between the working class and the so-called "national bourgeoisie" were declared to be non-antagonistic:

> "The contradiction between the national bourgeoisie and the working class is one between exploiter and exploited, and is by nature antagonistic. But in the concrete conditions of China, this antagonistic contradiction between the two classes, if properly handled, can be transformed into a non-antagonistic one and be resolved by peaceful methods."

To make it easier to give a philosophical justification for a variety of opportunistic alliances, the CCP introduced the concepts of "contradictions among the people" and "contradictions with the enemy." Contradictions among the people were said to be non-antagonistic, and those with the enemy to be antagonistic. The convenience of this terminology was that the content of the category "the people" could be shifted whenever the CCP wanted to make a new political deal. "The people" then became whoever agreed to cooperate with the communist movement, including capitalists and landlords. During the war against the occupation of China by Japanese imperialism, for example:

> "… all those classes, strata and social groups opposing Japanese aggression came within the category of the people, while the Japanese imperialists, their Chinese collaborators and the pro-Japanese elements were all enemies of the people that we mentioned."

This use dialectics thus attempted to justify a fundamentally corrupt policy.

For a while in the 1950s, the line of the CCP, that antagonistic contradiction could become non-antagonistic, and vice-versa, began to be adopted by the Soviets, too. Borrowing from Mao, official Soviet philosophy claimed the "peaceful transformation of antagonistic contradictions into non-antagonistic ones …. is not excluded, as China's experience shows."

Watering down the theory of contradiction was not the only change in dialectics that the Soviets made. Stalin's 1938 essay "Dialectical and Historical Materialism" omitted Engel's dialectical principle of the negation of the negation. This principle says that dialectical transitions, for example, the resolution of a contradiction, are eventually followed by a further dialectical transition, with a result containing some (but not all) features of the situation before the first transition. In 1950, Stalin watered down another of the dialectical laws defended by Marx and Engels, the principle that qualitative changes result from quantitative ones, and vice versa:

> "It should be said in general for the benefit of comrades who have an infatuation for outbursts that the law of transition from an old quality to a new by means of an outburst …. does not necessarily apply to a society which has no hostile classes. In a period of eight to ten years we effected a transition in the agriculture of our country from the bourgeois, individual-peasant system to the socialist, collective-farm system."

The abandonment of dialectical principles in its official philosophy is a significant symptom of the transformation of the Soviet Union from a revolutionary into a capitalist power. Rather than a philosophy of consistent struggle against capitalism and capitalist ideology, they ended up with a philosophy of complacency, based on the idea that the major battles were in the past, outbursts were no longer possible, and a rosy future was guaranteed to result from gradual quantitative change. The reality was to be just the opposite, however, the reversal of workers' power in Russia and China.

How Contradictions are Resolved

A contradiction is only resolved when it stops being a contradiction, when the opposite sides of the contradiction stop struggling against each other. Study of the various theories that have been put forward about how contradictions are be resolved, including the analysis of the evidence available from a variety of sources, including the practice of labor, class struggle, war, and natural science, etc., lead to the following conclusion: Contradictions that human beings can influence can only be resolved or moved toward resolution by intensifying the struggle of their opposite sides, increasing their negative relationship to each other.

Right now, the costs of a wrong philosophical understanding of the nature of contradiction are particularly high. The international working class can only liberate itself from capitalist slavery and all that implies, that is, war and fascism, by understanding and taking advantage of the contradictions of capitalism. Thus the main political task the working class has is to intensify the contradiction between itself and the capitalist class, in order to move that contradiction toward resolution by revolution. Intensifying this contradiction means increasing the working class's ability to fight by strengthening its commitment, knowledge, and organization in a variety of ways. The key element of this process is the struggle against capitalist ideology and the fight for a communist understanding, carried out in a variety of contexts. This means increasing the party's connections and influence within the working class, fighting racism and nationalism, exposing other forms of fascist ideology, organizing the united action of workers of different trades and countries and fighting for communist ideas within those actions, organizing in the army, and recruiting to the party.

How to Intensify Contradictions

Strengthening the working class movement and intensifying its contradiction with the capitalists does not always mean waving the red flag or denouncing capitalism in public. Quiet conversations in an army barracks or a worker's living room may do more to sharpen the contradictions between the working class and the capitalist class than public agitation alone would.

On its side, the capitalist class can also move to intensify the worker-capitalist contradiction by increasing police terror, lowering wages, wiping out civil liberties, spreading fascist ideology and racist propaganda, and promoting patriotism and loyalty to the "homeland." It can also strengthen itself by disciplining its members and supporters and purging those that undermine its credibility: the Enron and World.com crooks, pedophile priests, etc.

A more intense contradiction between the working class and the capitalist class will often show up in demonstrations, violence, arrests, turmoil, and in casualties on both sides. This intensifying contradiction can only be resolved by revolution, but revolution or violence is not necessarily involved in resolving all social contradictions. One Soviet attempt to define "non-antagonistic contradiction" was based on this idea. A contradiction was declared to be non-antagonistic if it could be resolved without violence, for example, by discussion, by criticism and self-criticism. It is a mistake, however, to identify intensifying a contradiction with violence. The way a contradiction is made more intense depends on the particular things or processes which come into contradiction within it, as well as on the reasons for resolving it, the other means available, etc. Relations between enemies are often violent, but involving violence does not describe some special type of contradiction, but only a particular way in which a contradiction can become more intense.

Although the means for doing it are discussion and criticism rather than violence, resolving a contradiction within an individual person or inside the party does not avoid making it more intense, and often involves one or more abrupt, qualitative changes. Contradictions within people and collectives are not resolved by waiting for them to die out, "mediating," or "managing" them, and while these contradictions remain, they can drive a person or political organization in the wrong direction. Unresolved contradictions continue to act and cause change whether they are ignored or not. Frank and honest discussion in which contradictory viewpoints, practices, and tendencies, confront each other intensifies these contradictions, but just for that reason, it moves them toward resolution. In most cases, this intensification does not have to involve lecturing, yelling, rudeness, or disrespect—much less violence--and if it does involve any of these things, the result will often be to create more serious contradictions.

Although the means for making a contradiction more intense are not the same in these cases as they were in the contradictions between classes, the basic strategy of "resolving by intensifying" is the same. Hoping that conflicts will go away by themselves, or making a pact that "I won't criticize you if you don't criticize me," does not resolve contradictions among friends and comrades, any more than it resolves the contradictions of capitalism. "People who live in glass houses should not throw stones" should not be our motto. We move forward through comradely criticism and self-criticism.

Should Contradictions Be Resolved?

We have said contradictions are only resolved by confronting and intensifying them, and unresolved contradictions cause change, whether they are recognized or not. It does not follow from this that all contradictions can or should be resolved. Some contradictions, like those in the basic constitution of matter, are not in our power to resolve, even if we wanted to. Some contradictions within people, like contradictions between their values and the evils of capitalist society, drive them to do good things, and should not be resolved, at least not right away. Some contradictions are too unimportant to resolve, and in other cases the process of resolution might do more harm than good. Not every married couple with serious conflicts should get a divorce, even if that seems to be the only way to resolve their contradictions.

If a contradiction is to be resolved, however, intensifying it is the way to go. This is not only the way to resolve contradictions, however. It is also the method for producing qualitative changes by shifting the dominant side of the contradiction. If you fight for the correct line in any political group, you may be able to strengthen the side that agrees with that line, even if the opposite side still exists and still fights for its line. Intensifying the struggle between the opposite sides moves toward resolution, but can produce good results even when it does not achieve resolution. Only resolution, however, can prevent the opposite that is not dominant from "biting back" and becoming dominant later on. Communist revolution is a decisive change in the worker-capitalist relationship, one that reverses the dominant and subordinate sides of that relationship. Revolution does not immediately resolve this worker-capitalist the contradiction, however. That contradiction can only be resolved when the capitalist class and its ways of thinking are finally wiped out, a process that will take a long time.

Alliances with the Enemy in Soviet Politics

The fundamental lesson from the Soviet experience of the NEP is that the Bolshevik policy of taking the pressure off the kulaks during the NEP was wrong. The Bolsheviks partially corrected this error by getting rid of the class of kulaks in the early 1930s, but they never recognized (or admitted) that by compromising with capitalists to make their contradictions with them less intense, they made a mistake that came close to destroying the USSR in the late '20s.

The theoretical justification of this policy was always a sore point in Bolshevik politics. Right after the October Revolution in 1917, Lenin claimed that there could be no "honest alliance" or coalition between workers and capitalists, because of the "radical divergence of interests

between these classes." The idea of the NEP, however, was that both the working class and the kulaks would benefit from it. Hence the NEP was supposed to be a kind of alliance for mutual benefit, despite the contradictions between the kulaks and the workers and working peasants.

Unfortunately the policy of making concessions to the kulaks is only one among a number of important examples in the history of the communist movement of opportunistic attempts to make alliances with capitalists. One of the most costly was the United Front Against Fascism, which was begun in France in 1934, and became the official policy of the world communist movement at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in 1935. The United Front was a reaction to the Nazi Party's coming to power in Germany in 1933. The essence of the Popular Front line was to try to make an alliance between communists and a supposedly "anti-fascist" section of the capitalist class, including the pro-capitalist Social-Democratic parties and trade-union leaders.

Since fascism is a capitalist strategy for continuing capitalist rule, one that capitalists need to adopt when they are in crisis, there is no section of the capitalist class that has more than a temporary and tactical opposition to fascism. By trying to prevent violent working class opposition to fascism, the Social-Democratic parties were in fact allies of capitalism in imposing fascism in Europe. So the idea on which the Popular Front was based, that fascism was the "common enemy" of workers and "anti-fascist" capitalists was a complete illusion. The more fundamental point, however, is that the strategy of trying to reduce the intensity of the contradictions between the working class and capitalists in order to make a temporary alliance with the enemy was not merely a bad idea in this particular case, it is strategy that historical experience has proved to be a disaster for the communist movement.

In the case of the Popular Front, the price of the alliance with "anti-fascist" capitalists and Socialists was to stop advocating and organizing for the overthrow of capitalism and the dictatorship of the proletariat, and to end communist exposures of the Social-Democrats' betrayal of the working class. Experience proved that by trying to make the contradictions between the working class and capitalist forces less intense in this way, the communist movement weakened itself and the working class more than it weakened the capitalist class. In fact, this attempt to moderate the contradictions that divided the working class from the capitalist class and its Social-Democratic junior partners signaled an opportunist turn from which the old communist movement never recovered, despite the heroic struggle that it waged against fascism during the Second World War.

This opportunist outlook was particularly influential in the so-called "national liberation" movements in many countries, including China and Vietnam. The political line of these movements was that in countries dominated by foreign imperialist powers, the working class and many of the capitalists of the dominated country have a common enemy based on their common "national interests." The conclusion that was drawn from this nationalistic reasoning was that communists and "anti-imperialist" capitalists should moderate the contradictions between them and join forces against the "main" imperialists. This strategy was tried in many countries under a variety of conditions, and produced a perfect record for the capitalists. Capitalists won everywhere, and whatever opportunities for profit that imperialism temporarily lost on the battlefield, it was able to get back through investments in the "liberated" countries.

As fundamentally harmful as these alliances with the enemy proved to be, the Bolshevik version of antagonistic contradiction theory, even if it had been correct, would not have justified the policy. We saw above that that the Chinese communist version of non-antagonistic contraction theory was employed to justify alliances with the enemy, but did so only by making the theory more incoherent.

Regardless of the details of its formulation, the theory of non-antagonistic contradictions and the policy of allying with the enemy do have a crucial error in common: They both involve trying to resolve contradictions or make them less dangerous by attempting to make them less intense. Historical experience shows that this idea is wrong, and that the dangers of trying it are immense.

In an era of increasing inter-imperialist rivalry and thus of imperialist war and fascism, we must remember that the old communist movement adopted these policies out of fear of the intensifying contradictions of the 1930s, and the illusion that it would gain capitalist "allies." The mistakes they made were ultimately fatal to the old movement. Learning from their errors (and not repeating them) is vital if we are to move toward the ultimate victory of the communist movement.

Footnotes for the article "Antagonistic and Non-Antagonistic Contradictions," *The Communist*, Summer 2004, pp. 27 - 34.

p. 27, "'... two mutually conditioning...,'" translated from K. Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1, *Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels Werke*, Berlin: Dietz Verlag, volume 23, p. 63. cited as *MEW*, with volume and page number, *e.g.*, *MEW* 23:63. A different English version is in *Karl Marx Frederick Engels Collected Works*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975 -, Volume 35, p. 58. References to this edition are written as "*CW*", followed by the volume and page number, for example: *CW* 35:58.

p. 27, '..."create a form in which they can move themselves,'" K. Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1, *MEW* 23:118 - 9. Cf. *CW* 35:113.

p. 28, '"In all cases then there is a progress toward equilibration,'" from H. Spencer, *First Principles*, New York: A. L. Burtt, 5th ed., n.d. (1880), pp. 419.

p. 28, "... contradiction is 'the antagonism of forces acting in different directions'," from N. Bukharin, *Teoriia istoricheskogo materializma: Populiarnyi uchebnik marksistskoi sotsiologii*, Moscow: Gos. Iz., 3rd edition, 1923, p. 77. Translated as *Historical Materialism: A System of Sociology*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969, p. 74. This was a communist party textbook, originally published in Russia in 1921, and reprinted many times.

p. 28, "...all change would be caused from the outside, a claim that Bukharin makes explicitly," *ibid*., pp. pp. 82 - 3.

p. 28, "... hold back European and Chinese capitalists by controlling the oil they need...": U. S. politicians who brag that it was pressure from the U. S. empire, rather than its internal conflicts, which caused USSR to collapse, and the fake leftists who agree with them, provide another example of this mechanist idea that change comes from the outside.

p. 28, "'equality of forces'," from N. Bukharin, "Protivorechiia sovremennogo kapitalizma [Contractions of contemporary capitalism]," *Bolshevik*, 1924, no. 10, p.10. Bukharin said that the opposing sides are unlikely to admit that the opposite "forces" are equal, but the possibility of agreement exists--according to him--even if the contending imperialists don't recognize it.

p. 29, "'... fight to a decision," Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*, CW 3:88.

p. 29, "'... something possibly to be prevented'," *ibid*., *CW* 3:89.

p. 29, "'The unity (coincidence ...)'," from Lenin, "On the Question of Dialectics," *Collected Works*, Moscow, 1961, vol. 38, p. 360.

p. 29, "'The bourgeois relations of production...'," from Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, CW 29:263 - 4.

p. 29, "In 1936, they had declared...," from J. V. Stalin, "On the Draft Constitution of the U. S. S. R.," November 1936, *Leninism: Selected Writings*, New York: International Publishers, 1942, pp. 384, 388.

p. 30, "'Antagonism and contradiction are not...'," This is a comment that Lenin wrote in the margin of his copy of N. Bukharin's book *Ekonomika Perekhodnogo Perioda* [*Economics of the Transition Period*], Moscow, 1920. Bukharin had written, "Capitalism is an antagonistic, contradictory system," p. 43. *Leninskii Sbornik* [*Lenin Miscellany*], N. Bukharin, B. Molotov, and M. Savel'ev, editors, Moscow-Leningrad, 1929, vol. 11, p. 357. This marginal note was treated as tremendously important in Soviet philosophical discussions of contradiction from the 1930s onward. It is also used in Mao Zedong's essay "On Contradiction." Note that Lenin was claiming that there would be no antagonism under *socialism*, not just communism.

p. 30, "... kulak 'nests'", etc., from N. Bukharin, *The Way to Socialism and Worker-Peasant Union*, quoted in T. Anderson, *Masters of Russian Marxism*, New York: Appleton-Crofts, 1963, pp. 201-2, 211-2, originally published in 1925.

p. 30, "... would have to be eliminated as a social class": In 1928, the kulaks organized a "Grain Strike," and the Soviet Government had to send 27,000 armed workers to the countryside to confiscate the grain. Kulaks were only about 4% of the rural households in the late 1920s, but they controlled about 20% of the marketable grain, that is, grain not consumed in the countryside. Cf. J. V. Stalin, "On the Grain Front," *Works,* Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1954 vol. 11, p. 89; *History of the U. S. S. R. in the Era of Socialism*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1982, pp. 254, n1, n2, and 258.

p. 30, "'But not all contradictions...'," *Dialekticheskii Materializm* [*Dialectical Materialism*], A. Aizenberg, G. Tymyanskii, and I. Shirokov, eds., Leningrad, 1931, pp. 169-170.

p. 30, "Some of the definitions were quite complicated." A typical definition: "[A]ntagonistic contradictions grow in the course of struggle and become more acute, until one of the opposites is destroyed. Conversely, non-antagonistic contradictions become smoothed out and softened in the course of struggle," M. M. Rozental', *Marksistiskii dialekticheskii metod [Marxist Dialectical Method]*, Moscow: Gos. Izd. Polit. Lit.., 1952, p. 289. See also the examples in the next few notes.

p. 30, "... so that they could only be resolved by revolution.": "Antagonism is a particular aspect of a contradiction, in which the sides are related to each other as irreconcilable extremes. The best example of antagonism of a social character is the *class* contradictions between exploited and exploiting classes." M. B. Mitin, ed., *Dialekticheskii i Istoricheskii Materializm, Chast I, Dialekticheskii Materializm*, *[Dialectical and Historical Materialism, Part I, Dialectical Materialism],* vol. I, Moscow: Party Publishing House, 1931, pp. 149; "By antagonism we understand the struggle of opposites which is resolved by a revolutionary outburst," A. Aizenberg, *et. al*., *op. cit*.

p. 31, "'Because of their non-antagonistic character ...'," M. M. Rozental', *Materialisticheskaia Dialektika: Populyarnyi Ocherki Osnovnykh Zakonov Materialisticheskoi Dialektiki [Materialist Dialectics: A Popular Outline of the Fundamental Laws of Materialistic Dialectics]*, Moscow: Partizdat TsK VKP(b), 1937, p. 64.

p. 31, "... Stalin, in particular, had insisted...," from J. V. Stalin, "The Fifteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U. (B.)", 1927, *Works*, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954, Vol. 10, pp. 339 - 40.

p. 31, "It was not the worker-peasant

contradictions ….": In particular, the claim of L. D. Trotsky that without a general European revolution, the worker-peasant contradictions of the USSR would inevitably grow and destroy it has not turned out to be true. See L. D. Trotsky, *1905-i [The Year 1905]*, Moscow: 1922, p. 5, and, *Permanentnaia revoliutsiia [Permanent Revolution]*, Berlin: Granit, 1930, pp. 15 – 16.

p. 31, "...had a tendency to die out gradually...": "Conversely, non-antagonistic contradictions become smoothed out and softened in the course of struggle," M. M. Rozental', *Marksistiskii dialekticheskii metod*, p. 289. Bukharin sometimes explicitly said that the contradictions of capitalism would not die out gradually, but his mechanist theory gave him no way explain how this could be so. If all systems tend to equilibrium, why would not the capitalist system do so, as Herbert Spencer had claimed 50 years previously?

p. 31, "... only the struggle of opposites produces change...": "It should be kept in mind that the second type of contradiction, an example of which is the contradiction between the proletariat and the peasantry, has nothing in common with the *reconciliation* of opposites. *Reconciliation of a contradiction cannot in general be a source of development*. On the contrary, in the best case it can mean marching in place, and as a rule, it means moving backwards." M. M. Rozental', *Materialisticheskaia Dialektika,* p. 64.

p. 31, "Bukharin advocadted the idea of two types of contradiction..." See *N. I. Bukharin: Izbrannye proizvedeniia [Selected works],* Moscow, Izd. polit. lit., 1988, p. 232; N. Karev (a "Menshevizing Idealist") "K voprosy o teoreticheskykh kornax pravogo uklona [On the question of the theoretical roots of the right deviation]," *Bol'shevik*, 31 January 1930, no. 2, p. 44; J V. Stalin, "Concerning Questions of Agrarian Policy In The U.S.S.R. Speech Delivered at a Conference of Marxist Students of Agrarian Questions," in *Works,* vol. 12, pp. 168- 170 and see "Letters to Comrade Ch.," *Works*, Moscow: Foreign Languages Pubs, 1955, vol. 13, pp. 21-23.

p. 31, "... are antagonistic and must be resolved by revolution": In the Khrushchev era, after capitalism was restored in the Soviet Union, official Soviet philosophy abandoned the theory of revolutionary resolution of antagonistic contradictions: "In contemporary conditions, antagonistic contradictions are contradictions between the working class and capitalists. They can only disappear when the capitalist class will, *by peaceful or non-peaceful means*, lose political power, the means of production, and its ability to exploit workers." F. V. Konstantinov, ed., *Filosofskaia Entsiklopediia [Philosophical Encyclopedia]*, Moscow: Soviet Encyclopedia Publishers, 1963, vol. 1, p. 70, emphasis added.

p. 32, "'In accordance with the concrete ….'," in Mao Zedong, "On Contradiction," *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1967, Vol. I, p. 344. Originally published in 1937.

p. 32, "'The contradiction between the national bourgeoisie...'," in Mao Zedong, "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People," *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1977, Vol. V, p. 386.

p. 32, "'... all those classes, strata, and social groups...'," *ibid*., p. 385.

p. 32, "'... peaceful transformation of antagonsitic contradictions...'" See "Velikiia Oktiabr'skaia sotsialisticheskaia revoliutsiia i razvitie marksistskoi filosofii [The Great October Socialist Revolution and the Development of Marxist Philosophy]," lead article in *Voprosy filosofii [Philosophical Questions]*, 1957, no. 5, p. 9.

p. 32, "... omitted Engels' dialectical principle..." See J. V. Stalin, "Dialectical and Historical Materialism," in *J. V. Stalin*, *Problems of Leninism*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1976, pp. 835 – 873.

p. 32, "'It should be said in general ...'" From J. V. Stalin, *Marxism and the Problems of Linguistics*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1972, p. 27, originally published in 1950.

p. 33, "... non-antagonistic if it could be resolved without violence..." For example, in the early '50s, a Soviet philosopher gave the following specific characteristics of non-antagonistic contradictions: (a) they can be fully resolved without violence, (b) they can be resolved without an outburst, (c) resolving them strengthens the socialist system, and (d) the basic method of revealing and resolving non-antagonistic contradictions is by criticism and self-criticism. See S. P. Dundel', "O vnutrennikh antagonisticheskikh i neantagonisticheskikh protivoricheiykh [On Antagonistic and Non-Antagonistic Inner Contradictions]," *Voprosy filosofii*, Vol 7, no. 2, 1953, p. 62.

p. 33, "Lenin claimed there could be no 'honest alliance'...", in V. I Lenin, "Alliance Between the Workers and the Working and Exploited Peasants," *Collected Works*, vol. 26, p. 333.

p. 34, "... both the working class and the kulaks would benefit from it...": Lenin correctly claimed that the NEP would encourage the kulaks and produce more of them, "Report of the Substitution for a Tax in Kind for the Surplus Grain Appropriation System," *Collected Works*, vol. 32, p. 225.

p. 34, "... produced a perfect record for the capitalists ": In one recent example, the Iraqi Communist Party, by allying itself with the Baath Party, helped assure the rise of Saddam Hussein, and the deaths of thousands of communists. M. Farouk-Sluglett and P. Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship*, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001, pp. 140 -154.

p. 34, "...only by making the theory more incoherent": After the Sino-Soviet split in the '60s, Soviet philosophers attacked the CCP's version as wrong, but defended alliances between the working class and the bourgeoisie. For example: "Antagonistic contradictions involve the incompatibility of the basic interests of hostile classes, and their solution is impossible without the abolition of the old social order by means of class struggle and social revolution…. Mao replaces the question of class relations with the question of political blocs and alliances with the class that is fundamentally hostile to the working class, the bourgeoisie. Although such agreements are not to be excluded at certain stages, it is fundamentally wrong to deduce from this that the contradiction between the working class and the bourgeoisie is not antagonistic." M. Altaisky and V. Gorgieyev, *The Philosophical Views of Mao Tse-Tung: A Critical Analysis*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971, pp. 113-5.